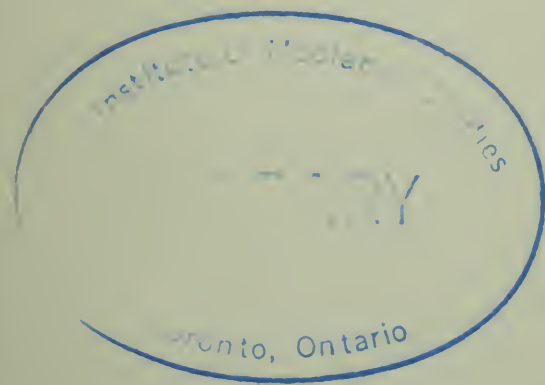




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CHARLES W. JONES

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The present study was the first of a series of lectures delivered at Cambridge in July 1897 to students of the Summer Meeting organised by the University Extension Committee. I have retained the lecture form, making but one or two slight changes.

I have essayed to give a broad sketch of certain historical and literary conditions necessary to the proper appreciation of mediæval romance. Compelled to be dogmatic in my statements, I must ask the reader to believe that I can give good reason and sufficient authority for every assertion.

*The **Bibliographical Appendix** is intended to be a special feature of the series opened by this study. The studies themselves aim at giving the general reader results as definite as the present state of scholarship allows; the bibliography is to aid the student who wishes to work at the subject for himself. I go through the study page by page, and make a note referring to and briefly characterising the best works upon points where I think the student is likely to require help. I have also added a little chronological appendix.*

ALFRED NUTT.

Autumn 1899.

**A List of the Series will be found on page 4
of the Cover.**

THE INFLUENCE OF CELTIC UPON MEDIÆVAL ROMANCE

By Celtic Romance we must understand a body of mythic and legendary fiction produced in these islands (partly in Ireland partly in Britain) during a period of time which ranges from the seventh to the twelfth century; by Mediæval Romance a body of literature produced (mostly on the Continent but partly in Britain) almost entirely during the twelfth century, but the influence of which was prolonged for another couple of centuries throughout Europe, and has never ceased to be efficient in English literature. It will be shown that the later body of romance owes much, very much, to the earlier. In the first place the historic conditions under which the general European literature of the twelfth century arose and was formed must be considered.

A French writer of the late twelfth century¹ has

¹ Jean Bodel, the author of the *Chanson des Saisnes*, a metrical narrative of Charlemagne's Campaigns against the Saxons.

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summed up the feeling of the cultured mediæval world towards imaginative literature in words often quoted, and which may thus be paraphrased : There are but three themes that may fittingly engage the poet's attention—the Fortunes of France, of Britain, and of Rome the Mighty—to quote the original French :

Ne sont que trois matières à nul home entendant ;
De France, et de Bretagne, et de Rome la grant.

The *Matière de France* is, as all know, concerned with Charlemagne and his paladins, as also with the wars and feuds of the great noble families in the days of Charlemagne and his successors. It has little to say about the world-important achievements of the great Frank—his reconstruction of the Western Empire, his destruction of the last organised heathendom among the South Germans. On the other hand, the *Matière de France* is filled and dominated by two elements which form much of the staple of mediæval history—the struggle of Christendom against Mohammedanism, the struggle of the feudal baron against his overlord.

Although the Emperor and his paladins bear German names, the *Matière de France* is essentially French, wholly unconnected with and deriving no element of its life's blood nor any portion of its substance from that older German world which was even then preparing for literary manifestation

in the South Teutonic cycles of Sigfried and Dietrich, the North Teutonic Eddas and Sagas.

As a body of literature the *Matière de France* reaches its highest point of development in the eleventh century, and then reigns without a rival. We can understand our French critic assigning it the first place, not merely because he was a patriotic Frenchman, but because he was a true son of his time. For the varying fortunes of strife with the Saracen, the self-sacrificing prowess of Roland, the treason of Ganelon, the dreary and bloody scufflings of Doon of Mayence and his kin, were a true image of the web of war and statecraft as it was even then being woven before his eyes.

Our French critic assigns the third place to the *Matière de Rome*, the fortunes of the Imperial City. Rightly so. Alike by the bulk of the literature it inspired and by the hold of that literature upon the time, it is far inferior to the other themes.

There remains the second theme, the *Matière de Bretagne*, the subject of this essay. I shall try to show that it is, as its name implies, a body of literature deriving circumstance, form and animating spirit from the older traditions of these islands of Britain and Ireland, traditions which, whilst they reached the Western culture-world through the medium of Britain, are represented most faithfully, as far as original tone and spirit are concerned, by the extant remains of Irish legend.

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The influence of Celtic upon *medieval romance*, such is my theme. What ideas, what visions do the words "mediæval romance" conjure up in our minds? We do not think of Rome the Mighty. Do we even think of the *Matière de France*? Should we not almost shrink from styling Charlemagne and Roland heroes of *romance*, instinctively choosing for them some word implying a sterner and more veracious touch upon the realities of life? If we think of romance at all in connection with the Charlemagne cycle, heroes are recalled like Huon of Bordeaux or Ogier the Dane, who are, as will presently be shown, British knights masquerading as paladins. No, the word "romance" evokes visions of Arthur and Avalon, of Merlin in his mystic air-wove prison, of sea-drowned Lyonesse and the enchantments of Britain, of Lancelot in the Black Chapel, and of Perceval girding on the sword of strange hangings, of the Queen's Maying and the Blatant Beast. Mediæval romance is for us all but another name for the *Matière de Bretagne*, for the story of Arthur and his knights.

Now the word *romance* originally designated a story written in *roman*, in eleventh- or twelfth-century French instead of in Latin. If we took language as the basis of our interpretation of the word we must needs say that romance is something essentially French. Now, whilst yielding to no one in love of and admiration for the literature of

France—one of the greatest and sanest of all manifestations of the human mind—I shall hardly be gainsaid in asserting that as a whole that literature lacks precisely the romantic note, the light that never was on land or sea. The master impulses of French literature are artistic idealism, urging the artist to select from the varied facts of life such as compose an harmonious whole, and satiric realism ever directing the national mind to those aspects of life and character which are susceptible of satiric emphasis and presentation. Both of these impulses are incompatible with the true romantic spirit, and both are entirely or well-nigh entirely lacking in that body of romance from which we derive our conception of the word “romantic.” Artistically, the Arthur cycle is chaotic and formless, whilst the satiric spirit may hardly be found at all in it, or where found, there is reason to surmise on other grounds a change in the legend. If the *Matière de Bretagne* be, as some scholars have held, a product of the French mind, is it not strange that it should differ so profoundly from other manifestations of the French genius?

What, then, is the extent and what are the dates of production of the *Matière de Bretagne*?

It forms a body of literature written originally in French, partly in prose partly in verse, rapidly translated into almost every European tongue, the earliest and by far the most important versions

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being the German ones. Printed on a uniform plan, the chief romances of the Round Table would fall little short of the "Encyclopædia Britannica" in size. Chronologically the rise and full expansion of this literature are comprised in a bare century, say from 1140 to 1240.

The chief French poet who wrote Arthurian romances, Chrestien de Troies, flourished from about 1150 to 1190. The heroes of his poems are Yvains (the Owen of the Welsh tales), Erec (the Geraint of Tennyson), Lancelot, Perceval and Gawain. Marie de France had versified a number of Breton and Welsh fairy tales before 1160. The Anglo-Norman poets who first treated the Tristan story as a connected whole, and of whose works in the original only fragments have survived, Thomas and Beroul, also wrote before 1160. The lost French poem of Lancelot upon which Ulrich von Zatzichoven based his German version is probably as early. In fact, all the especially "romantic" episodes and personages of the cycle had found an abiding literary form before the end of the third quarter of the twelfth century.

But the Arthurian legend has an historical as well as a legendary side, and this had acquired European notoriety through the medium of literature a generation previously. Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae* dates from the year 1136, Wace's French version from the middle

of the century, Layamon's English adaptation (by far the earliest English form of any part of the Arthur cycle) from the end of the century. It would, however, be a mistake to assume that because the legend found an earlier home in historical rather than in imaginative literature, the romantic element is necessarily the younger of the two. It can, on the contrary, be proved that the romantic form must have been popular in part of France for at least half a century preceding the issue of Geoffrey's History. An Italian scholar, Signor Pio Rajna, has traced names belonging to the Arthurian cycle, in especial those of Arthur himself and of Gawain, in Italian documents dating from the first quarter of the twelfth century. In some cases the nature of the deed shows that the individual mentioned cannot have been born later than the year 1080. In other words, the Arthurian cycle was known in Italy in the last quarter of the eleventh century, and was sufficiently popular to have exercised an influence upon the names of the population. Needless to say that this popularity could only be due to the existence of romantic tales, such as we find in literary form seventy to one hundred years later. To the enthusiasm of a few Italians for these foreign tales, to the chance, the mere chance which has preserved the documents in which that enthusiasm found an echo, we owe our knowledge of the fact that the Arthurian

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Romance as an organised body of French literature is at least three-quarters of a century older than the oldest extant texts.

How did the Arthur legend reach Italy? This question involves consideration of the means by which it was spread through France and from thence throughout Europe. The Italians certainly derived their knowledge from the Normans, who established their sway over Southern Italy and Sicily in the second half of the eleventh century. Both Robert Guiscard and Roger of Sicily had that love of song and letters which, no less than statecraft and valour, the Vikings had brought with them from their northern home. To minstrels of their Courts we must ascribe that knowledge of the Arthur cycle testified to by Signor Rajna's discovery. And as the Norman conquest of Southern Italy is anterior to and independent of the Norman conquest of Britain, we cannot hold the latter event responsible for Norman knowledge of the legend. As a matter of fact, the Normans undoubtedly learnt the stories from their Breton neighbours. From the foundation of the Duchy of Normandy in the early years of the tenth century onwards the relations of the Norman dukes to the Bretons had been continuous and chequered. At times the asserted Norman overlordship was vindicated by war and actual occupation of the country; at times peace reigned and

the ducal families intermarried. William the Conqueror, as is well known, had no stauncher ally than the Duke of Brittany when he set forth to wrest from the Saxons the island home of the Bretons' ancestors. We are not compelled to content ourselves with surmises; we possess positive and trustworthy testimony to the early popularity of the Breton lays in Normandy. How early it is difficult to say. But oral transmission from Brittany to Normandy must have been at work at the latest in the first half of the eleventh century.

Some scholars have held that to this oral diffusion of the Arthur legend by Breton minstrels is wholly due its spread throughout France, and that the French romance-writers took from their Breton informants little more than a mass of names and a few skeleton plots, furnishing themselves the detailed incident, the form and the animating spirit. But we can detect a written as well as an oral transmission. Many of the names in the French romances not only betray the fact of their derivation from a written source, but also that this must have been in the Welsh rather than in the Breton form of the common Brythonic tongue. The Celtic immigration into Brittany from Britain, to which the present Celtic population of the former district owes its origin, took place gradually from the fourth to the sixth century of our era. The lapse of ages brought about difference of speech,

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so that although in the eleventh and twelfth centuries the difference between Welsh and Breton was far less than at the present day, still it was sufficiently marked to enable an expert to decide whether a particular twelfth-century word is Breton or Welsh. A couple of examples may be cited. In the common Welsh name now written Owen the o represents a sound formerly akin to mute ě, and the word, written Ywein, was pronounced something like Er-wen. Now in the French romances the word is written Yvains, and was pronounced Eevañ. The French scribe took the Welsh y (= ě) for his own y (= ee), the Welsh u (= w) for his own u (= v), and so turned ěwen into eevan. Had he *heard* the sound he could never have written down Yvains. A similar piece of evidence is supplied by the name of the Welsh hero Caradoc. His standing epithet in Welsh literature is composed of two words written *breich bras*, and meaning great arms : breich = arms and bras = great. The French copyist mistaking *bras*, great, for his own *bras*, arm, and making a shot at the unintelligible *breich*, turned the epithet into *brie bras*, or short arms. Now the Welsh term is pronounced *vreich vras* with the final s sounded, and had it reached the French poet orally, instead of in a written form, could never have yielded *brie bras*.

Thus evidence derived from the wording of the French texts as well as evidence derived from

indisputable historical facts testifies to a double mode of transmission of the Arthurian legend throughout the French-speaking world — oral, through the medium of Breton minstrels; written, through the medium of Welsh texts. This second mode of transmission is not only later than the Norman conquest of England it is consequent upon it. Great and varied have been the issues of that event; most important from the standpoint of general European literature have been the rise of a sixth-century Roman-British chieftain to the type and model of Christian heroic achievement, the coalescence and flowering of a mass of Celtic fairy tales into one of those supreme legends in which mankind sums up and sets forth its ideal.

The Conquest, which left the Duke of Normandy vassal to the King of France whilst it gave him a position of equal power and influence, contained all the germs of the secular rivalry of the two countries, a rivalry which only began when England, ceasing for a time to be English, became, as far as literary and social ideas were concerned, French. The new race of kings must needs have its own heroic legend, its *Matière de Bretagne* to rival the *Matière de France*, full as that was of the glory and might of old-time rulers of France. The Arthur legend lay ready to hand. It was welcomed much as the new family might welcome the old portraits, long relegated to

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the attics, of a yet earlier race than the one it had dispossessed, a race in connection with which it might seek other title-deeds than those of force. And as French rulers of England were among the foremost personalities of the twelfth century, the body of imaginative literature which they patronised was bound, on that score alone, to flourish and prosper.

It may be questioned though if the development would have been as rapid had the conquerors found the Arthur stories in the same form under which they were already familiar with them thanks to their Breton neighbours. Undoubtedly the fact that the stream of tradition ran deeper and purer in Britain than in Brittany, in especial the fact that it had retained a closer touch with historic reality, had much to do with the vast and sudden outburst of the legend. Whilst the Norman-French poet found an even richer mass of legendary incident than the Breton lays had familiarised him with, the scholar and historian found what he took to be authentic history. And from one point of view that history was far superior in his eyes to the *Matière de France*. We laugh nowadays at the attitude of the Middle Ages towards antiquity. The nature of classical civilisation was, as we see, utterly misapprehended. But for this very reason mediaeval men felt the reality of their connection with antiquity in a way impossible to us, and they

were keenly bent upon forging an unbroken chain knitting themselves to the mighty kings and barons of Rome and Greece. This tendency is especially marked in the twelfth century, an age of intellectual revival, of renewed curiosity concerning classical antiquity. Although the fiction of classical descent seems to have arisen first among the Franks and to have passed from them to the Celts, yet the latter elaborated it with far greater insistence, wove it far more solidly into the web of their national traditions. This tendency, whilst taking a different direction and resulting in an entirely different set of stories, is as strongly marked in Ireland as in Wales. In the latter there was at least some historical justification; the historical Arthur certainly represents the struggle of Romano-British civilisation against invasive Teutonic heathendom. Some connection there was, slight and fragmentary though it be, between the society championed by Arthur and that of Imperial Rome. Be this as it may, there can be little doubt but that the Brutus element in Geoffrey's History, the story of the Trojan and Roman descent of the British, which seems to us so tedious and so ridiculous, contributed very greatly to its popularity and influence, and that the purely romantic aspects of the legend derived from their association with this pseudo-history a status and weight they would otherwise have lacked.

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These causes might be deemed sufficient to account for the sudden and overwhelming popularity of the Arthur cycle in twelfth-century Europe. Of that popularity there is no more decisive proof than the influence it exercised upon other bodies of imaginative literature. The later works of the Charlemagne cycle are in detail, tone and spirit often as "Arthurian" as any purely Breton romance. Huon and Ogier are Arthurian heroes who have strayed by accident to the Court of Charlemagne. It is this later stage of the Charlemagne cycle which influenced thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Italy and furnished the soil from which was to spring the romance of Berni and Ariosto. In Germany, too, we find in the late twelfth and in the thirteenth century a number of works which belong to the old German heroic cycles, but betray in incident, form and spirit the influence of the "courtly," in other words, of the French Arthurian romance.

Causes, however, existed of a deeper, more permanent nature to which must be ascribed the effective sway of the Arthurian romance in twelfth-century Europe. Neither the patronage of the new lords of England, those new and ambitious competitors for the first place in the Western European world, nor the appeal to the antiquity-revering instincts of the age, would have sufficed. What were those deeper causes?

The Charlemagne cycle in its earlier form was, as already said, specially concerned with the strife of Christianity and Mohammedanism, with the struggle of vassal and overlord. Under neither of these aspects can its appeal to many minds during the twelfth century have been much weakened. But when the Charlemagne cycle first assumed literary form Christendom was standing upon the defensive ; in the period of the Crusades it boldly took the offensive. This fact brought about a marked difference of feeling both as regarded the relations of the Christian to the Mohammedan world, and as regarded the ideal of warriorhood. One outcome of the Crusades, an unexpected and unwelcome one we may be sure to their promoters, was an increase of mutual toleration, regard, and admiration. The complex attitude of mind which resulted herefrom could no longer be satisfied by the simple, straightforward enmity against the Saracens we find in the *Chanson de Roland* and kindred works. Again, the incidents of the Crusading wars, largely fought as they were outside the purely feudal framework in which the earlier works of the *Matière de France* are set, tended to produce a different conception of knightly requirement and virtue. The call to the Crusade was addressed to the individual conscience of every Christian man, and although the machinery by which Christendom organised itself was largely

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feudal, still far more scope was allowed for individual effort and initiative. The circumstances of the Crusades must in any case have brought to the front the type of the knight-errant, of the warrior to whom fighting and adventure are an end unto themselves, and are not dictated by considerations of feudal obedience and statecraft. Roland, falling alone in his glorious self-sacrifice, must always have represented at its highest one side of knightly endeavour; but knighthood had wandered into other worlds which the Roland ideal could no longer wholly fill. Another outcome of the contact between the younger West and the older, wiser East was an intensified appreciation of the world of mystery and magic. Here again the simpler tales which had charmed the men of the eleventh century failed to sustain their appeal.

I have left to the last the most potent and subtle of the causes which forcedly called a new literature into existence. To put it briefly, the patronage of literature was abruptly shifted from the one sex to the other. The poet no longer sang solely for men, but mainly for women. In the early part of the century changes in feudal custom granted to women the rights and privileges of feudal inheritance, and thereby made the heiress a factor of first-rate importance in the social and political life of the times. The student of twelfth-century England needs only to recall the *rôle* of

Matilda and of Eleanor of Aquitaine. The material and moral enhancement in the status of the great heiresses reacted upon that of all women of the aristocratic class. Throughout the century we find women among the most powerful and influential patrons of certain kinds of literature; we find them, too, actively promoting an attempt to re-organise social life and social morality in accordance with the ideals set forth in the literature they favoured. Here again the Crusades were a contributory cause. When the husband was away, it might be for years, fighting the Paynim, power and influence fell to the stay-at-home wife; nor, human nature being what it is, can it be subject for astonishment that prolonged absence led frequently to mutual infidelity, the very circumstances of which would tend to heighten and diversify the emotions of love and the modes through which they are manifested. For the husband's lady-love would often be a daughter of that older, mysterious civilisation with which he was brought into contact, a civilisation which had systematised love between the sexes into an *inextricable* blend of animalism, legal pedantry, and mysticism; whilst the wife's lover might be a cleric, with whom love had the attraction of the forbidden, or a minstrel, or one of the pages or knights of her household, her inferior, therefore, in station, wealth, or knowledge of life.

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Thus a new literature was inevitable, and, equally inevitably, it had to possess certain characteristics. It had to be distinct from the *Matière de France*; it had to recognise the change in the circumstances of Christendom and to cease harping upon feelings that were partly outworn; it had to take into account the new ideal of adventurous knighthood; it had to give full prominence to the elements of mystery and sorcery; above all, it had to please women and to give expression to a new conception of the relations between the sexes.

These requirements were fulfilled by the French Arthurian romance, fulfilled, as I hope to make clear, because the older Celtic legends out of which that romance grew contained in germ all the elements which the twelfth century demanded and which it could have found nowhere else. The Celtic genius was reincarnated in twelfth-century France because the times were favourable; it took the world by storm because it contained incidents, personages, traits of feeling and character which were susceptible of embodying the most perfect form of the twelfth-century ideal.

I pass on to the consideration of the older Celtic world, in which I seek the origin of the Arthur legend. Just as the historic conditions which determined the nature of the twelfth-century literature have been briefly sketched, so the historic

conditions under which early Celtic literature came into being must be considered.

Two great Celtic communities confront us in historic times—that of the Brythons, represented by the modern Welsh and Bretons; that of the Goidels, represented by the Gael of modern Ireland and Scotland. I shall, for convenience' sake, style them Welsh and Irish. They differ in important respects. The Welsh came under Roman influence, in pre-Christian days, some two to three centuries before it sensibly affected Ireland. Again, the Welsh had to fight for their national existence, and thus acquired a partial cohesion, a racial unity lacking among the Irish.

Great as are the differences due to these causes, they do but serve to emphasise the essential kinship between the two communities. In both, social organisation is still in that tribal stage out of which the Greek and Roman kinsmen of Welsh and Irish had passed centuries before, and had, when they came into contact with Celtdom, utterly forgotten. In both, legal theory and practice have but slightly progressed beyond the stage of universal private warfare—atonement for wrong-doing is made by compensation to the private sufferer, and not by State-exacted punishment. In both, the obligations of blood revenge are paramount, but the injurious effects of the practice are mitigated by strict rules. Both have an elaborate

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classification into ranks, a precise scale for estimating the worth and station of every individual. Both have but recently emerged from a theocratic stage, if the word be applicable to a state in which the soothsayer and spellwright equals the war-chief in authority and influence.

We gather our knowledge of the social and political organisation of the two Celtic communities mainly from their extant bodies of law. Our wonder at the archaic character of these legislations is increased when we learn that the laws were codified centuries after both communities had fully accepted Christianity and its accompanying classic culture. The tradition that the Irish codes are largely due to Patrick is in so far true as they are certainly the work of Christian clerics in conjunction with the *brehons*, or native legal class; whilst of the tenth-century Welsh Code of Howel the Good we know that it was actually submitted to and sanctioned by Rome.

Finally, we may note that, from the dawn of our knowledge concerning them down to the eleventh century, the two Celtic communities were in constant communication with each other, and that the communication was of a nature to affect the intellectual and moral activities of both peoples; moreover, that, except in so far as the Welsh struggle against the German invaders of Britain is concerned, they were both cut off from

political contact with the remainder of the European world except, to a slight degree, with the Breton kinsmen of the Welsh.

What kind of literature might we look for among these two communities? In the first place, we should expect to find it essentially similar, considering the essential similarity of their social, legal, and institutional standpoint. The nature of the literature would be determined by the historic conditions. The Celts had retained their archaic, pre-Roman social organisation with the utmost tenacity; they might be expected to retain archaic beliefs and imaginings with equal tenacity. They were still in the tribal stage; their literature might be expected to reflect the pretensions of the tribe, to inflame its ardour against rival tribesmen. They had but recently emerged from the theocratic stage; we should expect to find the tribal wizard, call him Druid or Bard, a most important character, and all that relates to his dealings with the unseen insisted upon. The duty of blood-revenge was paramount; we should expect a mass of narrative involving family and clan feuds.

The differences pointed out between the historic development of Welsh and Irish might also be expected to leave their mark upon the literature. The Irish came later under the influence of Roman culture; they are likely, therefore, to

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have preserved a more archaic presentment of Celtic antiquity. The Welsh had, and the Irish had not, a foreign foe to contend against; the sagas of the former are likely to be more epic in tone, and to divert to the racial enemy that ardour of combat which otherwise had spent itself upon a rival tribesman. In Ireland, on the contrary, where the country was split up among a number of clans, equal in pride of birth and pretension, divided by no real issues, but clashing continually against each other in border raids, we should expect to find the heroic type embodied less in the national champion against the foreign invader than in the glorified freebooter and tribal brave. Again, whilst the literature of both communities might be expected to betray few traces of the militant Christian feeling so characteristic of the *Chanson de Roland* and other works of the *Matière de France*, this would be less marked in Welsh than in Irish literature. For the German foes of Wales were heathens at first, and when they did accept Christianity the circumstances were such as to increase rather than diminish the hatred of the Welsh.

I have sketched hypothetically two literatures in outline, emphasising their points of kinship and dissimilarity. Did these literatures really exist, it may be asked, and can we be sure they are older than the French Arthurian romance of the twelfth

century? So far as Ireland is concerned, these questions must be answered unhesitatingly in the affirmative; as far as Wales is concerned, more doubtfully and cautiously. There exists a mass of Irish romantic literature which if printed would fill some two to three thousand octavo pages, known to be older than the eleventh century and traceable back in many cases with reasonable certitude to the eighth or even seventh century. These dates refer to the substance of the stories, not to their actual wording: this can seldom be carried back beyond the eleventh century, and for this reason. Ireland was ravaged in the ninth and part of the tenth century by the terrible Viking invasions. During this period a vast number of clerical and bardic foundations were destroyed, learned communities were scattered, MSS. were burnt, torn, or thrown into the water. During the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries Ireland had developed a marvellous intellectual activity, the signs and tokens of which are still found all over Western Europe. To this vigorous and promising growth of intellectual and artistic life, parallel with the outburst of song and study which characterised Anglo-Saxon England during a portion of the same period, the Viking invasions put a rude stop. But their purely destructive phase passed away after a time. The Norsemen were absorbed into the tissue of Irish society,

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enriching and strengthening it. Then came a revival of Irish story-telling, a revival of Irish learning. The old MSS. were hunted up, their torn and scattered fragments were transcribed in the language of the day, great collections of legend—historic, heroic, mythical, Christian-legendary—were formed, the traditional annals of the race were noted and systematised, and the result was consigned to great vellum MSS., the oldest existing of which is the Book of the Dun Cow, copied at the end of the eleventh century from older MSS. which have perished.

So far the Irish evidence. We cannot be so sure as regards Wales. Her MSS. are later, the oldest (the Black Book of Caermarthen) dating from the third quarter of the twelfth century. Nor do these MSS. betray plainly, as do the Irish ones, the fact that they are transcripts from older ones. Again, the practice of literary forgery was rife in mediæval Wales, and it is difficult at times to discriminate between the archaic and the pseudo-archaic. Nevertheless we do possess a certain amount of poetry which may be assigned to the seventh and eighth centuries, one poem, the Gododin, possibly to the end of the sixth century, and a small but precious series of legendary prose tales, the Mabinogion, which must antedate the twelfth century.

A very large proportion of this literature,

whether Irish or Welsh, consists of imaginative fiction, the themes of which are derived from the mythic and heroic traditions of the race. In characterising this fiction the word that rises involuntarily to the lips is the word "romantic." The most casual observer cannot but notice that there is a kinship of tone and spirit between this literature and the French Arthurian stories from which we derive our idea of the "romantic." To further characterise Celtic legendary fiction, let me record the requirements found necessary in the new literature of the twelfth century. That had, we saw, to exemplify the ideal of adventurous knighthood. This ideal is necessarily prominent in Irish legend, which is concerned not with great racial wars but with the achievements, often single-handed, of the adventurous champion. Again, we noted that the twelfth century demanded a fresh and more imaginative presentment of the world of sorcery and magic than earlier French literature could yield. But this element is especially marked in Irish story-telling, the expression of a race which had but recently passed out of the theocratic stage, which assigned the utmost prominence to the Druid and his arts. The twelfth century was tired in part of the struggle between Christian and heathen, and the Celtic tales have their being in a world remote from and untouched by Christianity. The twelfth century was eager for a woman's

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literature, for a new expression of the passion of love. But Irish fiction is peculiarly rich in love stories, and Irish legend has preserved a type of womanhood, independent, capricious, mistress of herself and her fancies, singularly akin, if the changed conditions of society be considered, to the great and noble ladies who ruled over Courts of Love, and held the bestowal of their favour the highest guerdon of knightly effort.

Here let me pause. I have shown that the development of Western Christendom during the late eleventh and the twelfth century inevitably threw older literature—in this case the *Matière de France*—into disrepute, and created the demand for a new literature. I have shown that one of the most important events of this period, the Norman-French Conquest of England, forced to the front a body of heroic fiction, the legend of Arthur and his knights, and gave it the advantage of powerful and fashionable patronage. I have shown that the Celtic-speaking peoples of these islands possessed a rich literature, which was bound, owing to the historic conditions of its production, to exhibit certain characteristics—characteristics largely similar to those which a different set of historical conditions tended to produce in twelfth-century literature.

The following up of these clues, the detailed examination of the lines of investigation here sug-

gested, must be left to other studies, which I hope to issue in this series—to studies of the Irish cycles of Cuchulinn, and of Finn and Ossian ; of the West Mabinogion ; of the Arthur and Grail legends ; of the Celtic Elysium ; as also of the great Continental cycles of romance. It is sufficient at present to show that the emergence of the Arthurian romance in the twelfth century is due to no arbitrary chance, but is the inevitable outcome of a long sequence of historic changes which had their centre and their culmination in these islands of Britain and Ireland.

CHRONOLOGICAL APPENDIX

Sixth to Eighth Century.

Building up of Irish heroic and romantic cycles in substantially the form in which they have come down to us fragmentarily.

Building up of British heroic cycle of Arthur and his Knights. The historic Arthur died in first third of sixth century ; heroic poems commemorating the struggle of Britons and German invaders were probably in existence at end of sixth or in first half of seventh century. Nennius' *History of the Britons*, in which the Arthur legend is already developed, both on the heroic and the romantic side, dates from end of eighth century.

Ninth to Eleventh Century.

Building up of the Charlemagne cycle, or *Matière de France*, culminating in the *Chanson de Roland*, of which

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the oldest form dates back to first half of eleventh century.

Early Tenth Century.

Settlement of Normandy and initiation of relation between the Duchies of Normandy and Brittany, which brought the Arthur stories to the knowledge of the Normans not later than the first half of the eleventh century.

Second Third of Eleventh Century.

Norman settlements in Sicily and South Italy. Spread of Arthur legend to Italy not later than last quarter of eleventh century.

Second Half of Eleventh Century.

Norman conquest of England, in which Bretons take prominent part. Norman contact, partly friendly, partly hostile, with Celtic-speaking population (a) in South Wales, (b) in Strathclyde, which still retained a Cymric-speaking population.

From Second Half of Tenth Century to Middle of Twelfth Century.

Considerable literary activity in Ireland. Irish sagas committed to MSS. which have come down to us either in their original form or in copies.

Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries.

Considerable literary activity in Wales. Gruffyd ap Conan returns to North Wales in 1073 after stay in Ireland and holds *eisteddfodau* during his long reign, which lasted till 1137. Rhys ap Tewdur returns in 1077 to South Wales from Brittany, and may have been instrumental in uniting the two strands of Welsh and Breton

romance. The *Mabinogion*, properly so-called, probably redacted in the last quarter of the eleventh century. Earlier poems, ascribed to celebrated sixth-century bards, are interpolated, added to and pastiched throughout the twelfth century. The stories of Kilhwch and Olwen, and the Dream of Rhonabwy, the only surviving Welsh Arthurian romances which antedate French influence, belong probably, in the form under which they have come down to us, to the middle of the twelfth century.

Twelfth Century.

1136. Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, first draft.

About 1145. Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Life of Merlin*.

1155. Wace's French translation of Geoffrey's *History*.

About 1150-1165. Marie de France. *Lais*.

About 1150. Beroul's *Tristan*.

About 1170. Thomas' *Tristan*, professedly based on the poem of the Breton Bréri.

1150-1188. Chrestien de Troies: *Tristan* (lost) about 1160, followed by *Erec*, *Cliges*, the *Chevalier à la Charrette* (about 1170), *Yvain*, and finally the *Conte du Graal*, written 1187-88, and left unfinished by the author.

With regard to the prose Arthurian romances, it is difficult to say anything more definite than that they go back substantially to the last twenty years of the twelfth century, but were continually being interpolated, added to, and reworked over until the middle of the thirteenth century, by which date they assumed the form under which they have come down to us.

First Quarter of Thirteenth Century.

Spread of the specific French Arthurian romances into Wales, giving rise to (a) new Welsh versions partly adapted from the French, (b) close and faithful Welsh translations representing earlier stages of the French romances than any existing MSS. of the latter.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

* * *The following notes aim at practical usefulness, not at bibliographical completeness. I have therefore, when I could, quoted popular and accessible works. I have added prices even where the books are out of print, although in such cases only approximate figures can be given.*

PAGES 2-3. *The Charlemagne Cycle.*

The best popular account in English is still that in Mr. Ludlow's *Popular Epics of the Middle Ages*, Macmillan, 1865, unfortunately out of print. Those who can read French and have access to a large library may be referred to L. Gautier's *Les épopées françaises*, 4 vols., 1879-1891, £4. General bibliographical information will be found in M. Gaston Paris' *La littérature française au Moyen Age*, 1890, 2s. 6d., and M. G. Lanson's *Histoire de la littérature française*, 1898, 4s. 6d. A summary of the *Chanson de Roland* is provided by Messrs. Way and Spencer, 1s.

PAGE 3. *The Matière de Rome.*

An excellent idea of the way in which classic antiquity was conceived of in the Middle Ages may be got from Mr. Steele's *The Story of Alexander*, 1894, 7s. 6d. Cf. also M. G. Paris' *Littérature*, ch. ii.

The Matière de Bretagne or Arthur Cycle.

There exists no general account of this body of literature, which is perhaps as well, as any one wishing to make himself acquainted with it must go to the texts themselves. In the second half of the fifteenth century an

abridged translation of the majority of then existing French romances was made by SIR THOMAS MALORY in the well-known work entitled the *Morte d'Arthur*. The student may read it in Mr. Rhys' modernised abridgment (2 vols., Scott, 3s.), in Sir E. Strachey's slightly modernised and abridged Globe edition, 3s. 6d., or, best of all, in Dr. Sommer's facsimile edition, 7s. 6d. An adequate idea of the Arthurian romance in its strength and weakness may be obtained from this fine work, a fountain-head of English prose.

Of the French prose romances themselves, Malory's originals, the following have been printed: the ordinary MERLIN (edited by Dr. Sommer, 1894, £1 16s.); the so-called HUTH MERLIN (edited by G. Paris and J. Ulrich, 2 vols. 1890-91, £1); the GRAND ST. GRAAL (edited by Furnivall, 2 vols. 1861-63, about £2 2s.; edited by Hucher, 3 vols. 1875-79, about £1 10s.); the QUESTE DU ST. GRAAL (edited by Furnivall, 1864, about £1 5s.). An abridged modern French re-telling of the chief prose romances has been provided by M. Paulin Paris, *Romans de la Table Ronde*, 5 vols. 1868-77, £1 10s.

Of the romances unrepresented or only partially represented in Malory, the best known are SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT (abridged and modernised by Miss Weston, 1898, 2s.), and TRISTAN AND ISEULT (abridged and modernised by Miss Weston, 1899, 4s.).

For the earlier metrical romances, see p. 32.

The introductory chapters of Mr. Maccallum's *Idylls of the King and Arthurian Story*, 1894, 7s. 6d., give a good account of the historic and philological questions involved. Branches of the Cycle have been treated monographically: the GRAIL LEGEND by myself, *Studies on the Legend of the Holy Grail*, 1887, now out of print; the MERLIN LEGEND, in German, by Albert Schulz, *Merlin*, 1852, about 12s. 6d., in English, by Dr. Mead, 1898, 15s.; the GAWAIN LEGEND, by Miss Weston, 1897, 4s. The

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articles on the subject in *Chambers's Encyclopædia* are good, those in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* are worthless.

PAGE 4. *Huon of Bordeaux.*

The French romance was admirably Englished by Lord Berners at the beginning of the sixteenth century. A beautiful modern French rendering by M. Gaston Paris has just been issued, 1898, 12s. 6d.

Ogier the Dane (Holger Danske).

The story of Ogier and his stay in the realm of the fairy queen, by whom he is beloved, is not, in spite of the hero's name, a Teutonic story, but a Celtic one, which has got attached to the Charlemagne Cycle probably in consequence of the popularity of this theme in the Arthur romance.

PAGE 6. *Chrestien de Troies.*

Two of Chrestien's Arthurian poems have been edited by Professor Förster: *Yvain*, 1891, 4s. (German adaptation by Hartmann von Aue, *Ywein*, edited by Bech, 1888, 7s.); *Erec*, 1894, 6s. (German adaptation by Hartmann, *Erec*, in Bech's edition). His *Chevalier à la Charrette* (Lancelot's rescue of Guinevere from Meleaguant) has been printed by Jonckbloet in his edition of the Dutch Lancelot, 2 vols. 4to, 1850, about 25s. His longest and most important work, left unfinished at his death in the last twenty years of the twelfth century, the *Conte du Graal*, is only extant in Potvin's excessively rare edition in 6 vols., Mons, 1866-71, worth about £6 6s. Professor W. W. Newell's *King Arthur and the Table Round*, 2 vols., Boston, 1897, comprises retellings from Erec, *Yvain* and the *Conte du Graal*.

Marie de France.

The best text of Marie's *lais* is Warnke's, 1885, 10s., with storiological notes by Reinh. Köhler (these are unfortu-

nately weak as regards the Celtic parallels). Roquefort's edition of the works, 2 vols. 8vo, 1820, about 18s., is useful because it has a modern French version.

Geoffrey of Monmouth.

Giles' translation in Bohn's series is adequate. The best existing text is that edited with valuable commentary by A. Schulz, 1854, about 15s. Professor Lewis-Jones is preparing a new edition for the Cymmrodorion Society. Wace's French version has been edited by Leroux de Lincy, 2 vols. 1836-38, about £1. Layamon's English version by Sir Fred. Madden, 3 vols., 1847, £1 10s.

PAGE 9. *Celtic Immigration into Brittany.*

The present Celtic-speaking Bretons derive their language almost certainly from the British immigrants of the fifth and sixth centuries, and *not* from the ancient Gaulish population. The best work on the immigration is M. J. Loth's *L'Émigration bretonne en Armorique*, 1883.

PAGE 10. *Welsh Originals.*

For a fuller development of the argument see M. J. Loth's article in the *Revue Celtique*, vol. xiv. (1892), pp. 475-503.

PAGE 11. *Norman Conquest.*

For all questions connected with the Conquest, the late Professor Freeman's great work (6 vols., partly out of print) should be consulted.

PAGE 13. *Trojan Origin of the Britons.*

The most accessible study for the English reader of this curious pseudo-historical fiction which the barbarian

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nations of North-Western and Northern Europe modelled upon the lines of the Trojan origin of Rome, familiar to them from Virgil, will be found in Rydberg's *Teutonic Mythology*, pp. 22-64, 1891, 10s. 6d. Readers of German may be referred to Professor H. Zimmer's erudite and brilliant work, *Nennius vindicatus*, 1893, 12s. (pp. 232 *et seq.*).

PAGE 14. "Courtly" Influence upon German Legend.

The *Nibelungenlied* itself, although purely Teutonic as far as incidents and personages are concerned, has not escaped the influence of the French romances upon the material life depicted as well as upon the sentiments of some of the personages. Later works, such as *Dietleib*, *Biterolf*, the *Wolfdietrich* tales, and portions of the *Thidrekssaga* (into which Arthur of Britain is introduced), show this influence markedly. The English reader may consult Mr. Ludlow's *Popular Romances of the Middle Ages* (already mentioned, *supra*, p. 30), the German reader Edzardi's edition of the *Thidrek* and *Volsungsa Sagas* (3 vols. 1872-80, 10s. 6d.) or F. v. d. Hagen's edition of the *Heldenbuch* (*Biterolf*, the *Rosengarten*, the *Wolfdietrich* poems, &c.), 2 vols. 1855. about £1 1s.

PAGES 16 and 17. *Social and Political History of the Twelfth Century.*

As far as England is concerned, full information will be found in Miss Norgate's excellent *England under the Angevin Kings*, 2 vols., 1887, £1 12s. Cf. also, for the social and moral ideals of the time, Miss Farnell's *Lives of the Troubadours*, 1896, 6s. Among the great patronesses of literature in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries perhaps the most famous was Marie de Champagne, daughter of Louis VII. of France, the protectress of Chrestien de Troies. M. Gaston Paris has argued that

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX 35

Chrestien wrote at her instigation the *Chevalier à la Charrette* (the story of Lancelot's love for Guinevere) to exemplify the ideal of courtly love first elaborated in Southern France.

PAGES 19, 20. *Welsh and Irish History.*

There is no good general work in English on the legal and social institutions of the Celts. As far as Wales is concerned, the best book is F. Walter's *Das alte Wales*, 1859, about 10s. 6d.; as far as Ireland is concerned the following volumes of Monsieur d'Arbois de Jubainville's *Cours de Littérature celtique*: vol. i., *Introduction à l'étude de la Littérature celtique*, 1883; vol. vi., *La Civilisation des Celtes et celle de l'épopée homérique*, 1899, 6s. 9d.; vols. vii. viii., *Etudes sur le Droit celtique*, 1894-95, 13s. 6d. Mr. Ginnell's *Brehon Laws* (1894, 6s.) and Hubert Lewis' *Ancient Laws of Wales*, 1890, 12s. 6d., are useful as collections of material but unsafe guides for the general reader.

Professor Rhys' *Celtic Britain* (3s.) is a brilliant and suggestive discussion of the ethnological and prehistoric problems connected with the Celtic settlements in these isles. X

PAGES 21, 22. *Irish and Welsh Literature.*

Dr. Douglas Hyde's *A Literary History of Ireland from Earliest Times to the Present Day*, 1899, 16s., is a masterly introduction to the subject. A fair idea of the earliest Irish heroic legends may be obtained from Miss E. Hull's *Cuchullin Saga*, 1898, 7s. 6d., and of mediæval Irish literature generally from Mr. St. Hayes O'Grady's *Silva Gadelica* (containing some forty texts, mostly of a legendary character), 1893, £2 2s. Dr. Joyce's *Old Celtic Romances*, 1894, 3s. 6d., is a pleasing collection, but the tone is much modernised. X

Stephens' *Literature of the Kymry*, 1876, about 15s., is a

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sound but uninspiring account of early Welsh literature. Luckily the masterpiece of Welsh mediæval prose, the so-called *Mabinogion*, a collection of mythic and romantic tales partly drawn from the ancient mythology which the Welsh shared with the Irish, partly from the legendary history of Britain, partly from the Arthurian romance as modified by the French poets, is accessible to the English reader in Lady Charlotte Guest's magnificent rendering, 1877, 18s.

Matthew Arnold's *Lectures on the Study of Celtic Literature*, 2s. 6d., delivered in 1867, are admirable in critical insight and sympathy, though out of date as regards the positive information given. But with this *caveat* no better introduction to the study of Celtic antiquity can be recommended.

PAGE 24. *The Book of the Dun Cow.*

The *Leabhar na h-Uidhri*, copied by a scribe slain in 1104 from earlier MSS. (most probably, as conjectured by Professor Zimmer, those brought together and edited by Flann of Monasterboice, who died in 1056, and was considered the leading scholar of his age), only survives in fragments, a facsimile edition of which has been issued by the Royal Irish Academy.

The Black Book of Carmarthen has been facsimiled by Mr. Gwenogfryn Evans, Oxford, 1896.

The *Gododin* of Aneurin, edited by Th. Stephens, has been issued by the Hon. Soc. of Cymmrodorion, 15s.

PAGES 25-27.

For the elaboration of the argument contained in these pages, see the final chapter of my *Studies on the Legends of the Holy Grail*.

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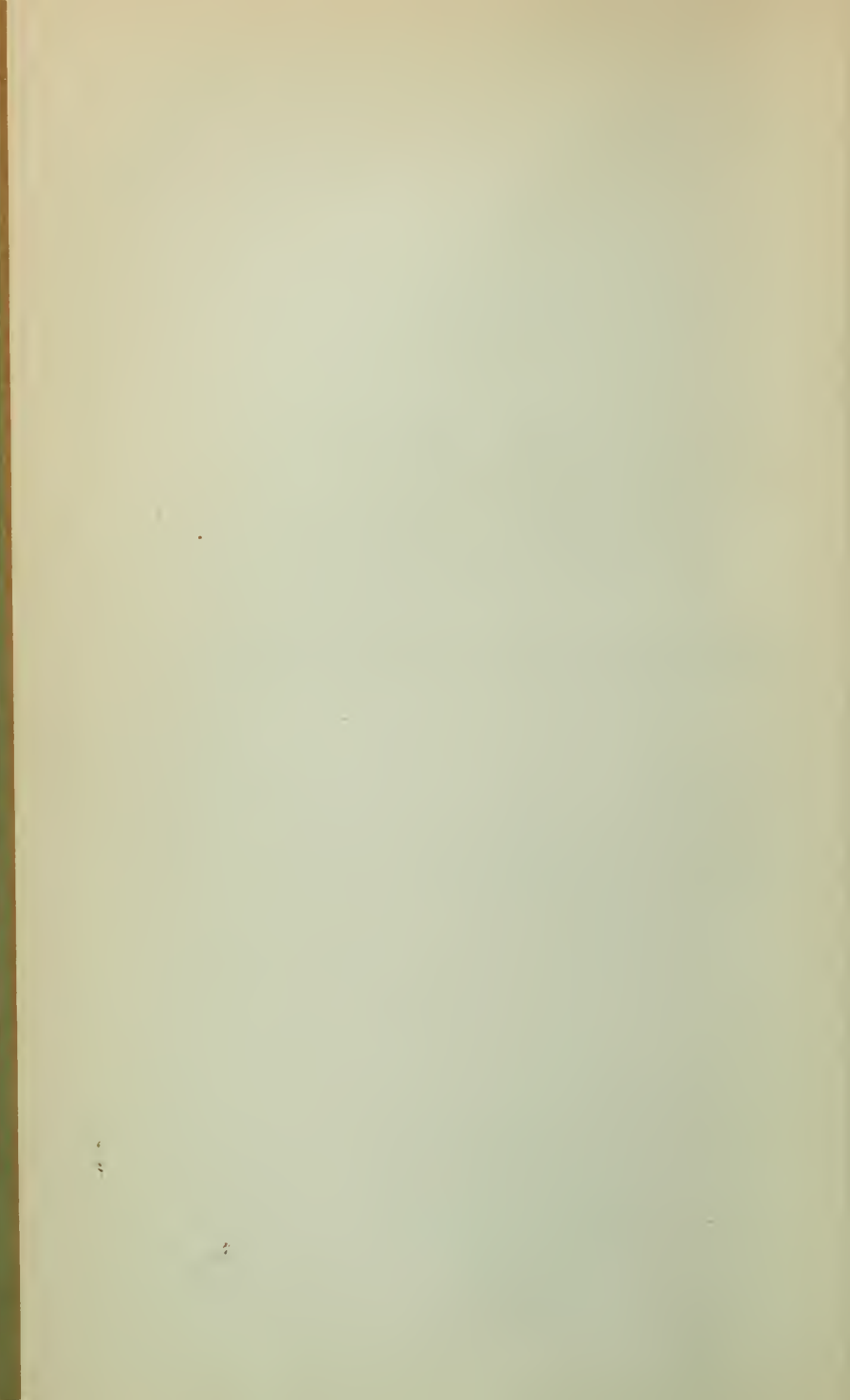
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PREFACE

THE present study is a reprint, with a few omissions and additions, of a paper read before the Gloucester Philosophical Society. The lecture form has been retained. The following synopsis may be found useful.

What is Folklore—The Science of Tradition—Tradition is subject to laws—The lore of the uneducated—A cure for warts—Other medical ceremonies—Their meaning—The unit of society among savages—The blood-feud—Blood-brotherhood—Votive offerings and their meaning—Witchcraft: sympathetic magic—The value of the study of folklore—Its political importance, especially for the British Empire—Its importance for missionary work—Its social value to us as individuals—Its value in literary culture—In the study of the Bible—Its relations to our conception of history—Bibliography.

I have left the second edition unaltered save for a few slight stylistic changes, and for the additional note on p. 38. The Bibliography has been revised.

E. S. HARTLAND.

January 1904.



FOLKLORE:

WHAT IS IT AND WHAT IS THE GOOD OF IT?

I ONE day met a friend from a neighbouring town, who as soon as he had greeted me inquired whether I had been over to a concert recently given there, about which he was enthusiastic. I was obliged to admit that I had not been, and to excuse myself I floundered into the still more humiliating confession: "You see, I know very little of music." He looked at me with a solemn pity in his eyes, and said: "Ah, yes! it is folklore you are interested in."

Well, I am interested in folklore; there is no denying it; and I am glad to have an opportunity of telling you why I am interested in it. I hope that when I have done so you will think there is at least no occasion for pitying me.

First, let me try to tell you what folklore is. Euclid, we know upon the unimpeachable authority of Lord Dundreary, is "all about letting A, B, and C be a triangle—as if I cared what they were." In the same way, perhaps, many of you

may be disposed to think that folklore is all about fairy tales, cures for warts, and so forth—things that no intelligent person would concern himself with. And indeed it must be admitted that, just as one branch of the science of mathematics, usually associated with the great name of Euclid, does teach (among other things) the properties of triangles, so folklore does investigate (among other things) the meaning of fairy tales and of cures for warts. But these are only a small part of folklore, as folklore itself is but a part—though, as I venture to think, a very important part—of the larger science of Anthropology—the Science of Man. The portion of Anthropology with which folklore deals is the mental and spiritual side of humanity. It is now well established that the most civilised races have all fought their way slowly upwards from a condition of savagery. Now, savages can neither read nor write; yet they manage to collect and store up a considerable amount of knowledge of a certain kind, and to hand on from one generation to another a definite social organisation and certain invariable rules of procedure in all the events of life. The knowledge, organisation, and rules thus gathered and formulated are preserved in the memory, and communicated by word of mouth and by actions of various kinds. To this mode of preservation and communication, as well as to the things thus preserved

and communicated, the name of Tradition is given ; and Folklore is the science of Tradition.

But here you will tell me : It is impossible to have a science of anything which does not fall into method, and is not capable of being classified and reduced to rule. Tradition is admittedly shifting, uncertain, chaotic ; and how can you have a science of Tradition ? It is a contradiction in terms.

So, indeed, it seems to be ; but wait a bit. There is a confusion of thought in the objection. If by Tradition you mean the report of an alleged event not recorded in any contemporaneous writing, but handed down by word of mouth only, then I confess—Tradition is shifting and uncertain.

But even then it obeys *some* laws. Two Gloucestershire legends will illustrate what I mean. The first is recorded by Rudder, who, speaking of Chosen Hill, says : "There is a silly tradition in this part of the country that the church was begun to be built on a more convenient and accessible spot of ground, but that the materials used in the day were constantly taken away at night, and carried to the top of the hill, which was considered as a supernatural intimation that the church should be built there." * Now, this is a local variant of a very common story, accounting for the sites of churches up and down the country. In every

* *A New History of Gloucestershire* (1779), p. 339. *Chosen* is apparently a corruption of *Churchdown*.

case, of course, the story has arisen long subsequent to the erection of the church, for it professes to account for a situation which is, for some reason, inconvenient or absurd according to the circumstances of the period when the story arose. When the real reason for a given fact is unknown or forgotten, in certain stages of culture a story arises (this is the law) attributing to it a supernatural origin. A church is naturally exposed in a special manner to supernatural interference. Hence it is only what we may expect if we find supernatural interference invoked as the reason for the site of a church. The fact forgotten here is that the original village was on the top of the hill. The hilltop was in fact a settlement from very early times, and was fortified by a rampart and ditch, of which the remains are still to be seen. A church must have stood here for many hundred years, since the existing building contains stones carved with what is called Anglo-Saxon work, which have been built into the present fabric in places other than those for which they were designed. The hilltop was, however, practically abandoned during the Middle Ages, for so early as the twelfth century Roger, Archbishop of York, to whose see Churchdown belonged, laid pipes from the well near the top to supply the present village with water, and one of the early miracles credited to Thomas à Becket was performed there during the

operation.* Hence there has been plenty of time for a tradition like that I have mentioned to grow up.

The laws affecting tradition as a record of historical events have as yet hardly been investigated with scientific accuracy. Theories there have been without number; but these have been, for the most part, little more than guesses. Still, I think I may venture to lay down another law, namely, that when a fact of ancient date is remembered, the memory of it is not a bare transcript of the event, but is transfigured into some imaginative form, and in some circumstances that transfiguration takes a supernatural shape. Let me illustrate this by the legend of Bisley Church: another instance of the same story of the removal by night of the stones, here definitely said to have been accomplished by the devil. Now, the place pointed out as the intended site of the church is the site of a Roman villa; and when the church was restored, some years ago, portions of the materials of that villa, including an altar of the Penates, were found embedded in the walls.† The fact remembered was

* *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Soc.* vol. i. p. 167; Abbott, *St. Thomas of Canterbury*, vol. ii. p. 220, quoting in parallel columns the accounts of Benedict (*Materials for the History of Thomas Becket*, Rolls Series, vol. ii. pp. 261-3), and William of Canterbury (*Materials*, vol. i. pp. 253-6).

† *Gloucestershire Notes and Queries*, vol. i. p. 390.

the removal of the materials from a certain spot ; the fact forgotten was that the materials were part of a Roman villa used as a quarry for the church ; the supernatural element intruded into the place of the forgotten fact was that the devil for purposes of his own removed them. It is not too much to say that this intrusive supernatural element is the means whereby the memory of the fact has been preserved for 800 or 1000 years. It is like the tannin of the Irish bogs, which, by permeating the substance of the most perishable articles, has preserved for fifteen or twenty centuries the remains of weapons, implements, and household stores, down even to kegs of butter, used by the ancient Irish in their crannogs and fen-fortresses, and so enabled us to reconstruct in a large measure the material civilisation of a remote and forgotten period.

I have mentioned these two legends for the purpose of suggesting to you that, even as the record of alleged events, Tradition, however misleading and incorrect, obeys laws as yet imperfectly understood only because imperfectly investigated. But you will observe that when I thus digressed, I was not dealing with Tradition as a witness to specific facts. Nay, not only was I not comparing it with facts, I was using the word Tradition in a much wider sense. Tradition as an object of science means the whole body of the lore of the unedu-

cated. It thus includes customs and institutions, superstitions and medical practice, and many other things beside stories. Stories, too, divide themselves into tales told for amusement, and tales of alleged events intended to be believed. If you put side by side the customs and institutions of different savage races—say of the Australian blackfellows and the Red Indians of North America—amid very considerable divergences you find surprising points of resemblance. And the same thing applies to their beliefs, their medical practice, their witchcraft, their festivals, their stories, and, in short, their way of regarding the world at large and all that is therein, both natural and supernatural. Turning from savage nations to the peasantry of civilised Europe, you will be still more astonished to learn that up to the present time the very same conditions of thought are discernible wherever they are untouched by modern education and the industrial and commercial revolution of the last hundred years. There can only be one interpretation of this. The human mind, alike in Europe and in America, in Africa and in the South Seas, works in the same way, according to the same laws. And the aim of the science of Tradition is to discover those laws, by the examination of their products, the customs and beliefs, the stories and superstitions handed down from generation to generation, to ascertain how those products arose and what

was the order of their development, and so to co-operate with physical anthropology and archæology in writing, as it has never yet been written, the history of civilisation.

If there be one superstition better known, at all events to educated people, than another, it is the common cure for warts, alluded to just now. Ask a peasant anywhere what you should do to cure your warts, and you will at once be told to take a piece of beef, or a piece of bacon, or a potato, or some such object, and rub the wart with it, and then bury, or throw away, the meat or potato. Sometimes you are advised to tie in a string as many knots as you have warts, touch each of the warts with one of the knots, and then throw away, or bury, the string. The warts will disappear as the meat, or potato, or the string, decays. Now, this is a very silly superstition ; quite meaningless, you may think, founded on nothing ; and you are astonished that any one can believe it. But there you are too hasty. No belief, no superstition in this world is founded upon nothing. Many of them are founded upon what we deem in the light of science to be insufficient data, and built up by erroneous reasoning ; but none of them, not one, is founded upon nothing ; while very often the reasoning is accurate, the premises only are insecure. Let us look at this cure for warts. In the first place, warts have an unaccountable way—unac-

countable, I believe, even by the most advanced science of the present day—of coming and going. You can never tell whether a wart has come to stay. Consequently, it very often happens that warts do disappear after being treated as the peasant-doctor prescribes. And logicians tell us that there is no commoner blunder in reasoning than that expressed in the phrase "*Post hoc, propter hoc*"—after this, therefore because of it—and that the blunder arises, on the one hand, from not taking into account all the possible causes of an effect; and, on the other hand, from not testing the supposed cause by other evidence. Neither of these logical operations is performed by the peasant. He knows what he has done to the wart; and if the wart disappear, he attributes it without any doubt to his action.

So much for the logical blunder. But what was it that, first of all, caused a wart to be thus treated? Oh, you will say, nobody knows: accident, perhaps. I am not so sure that it was accident; and if nobody knows, perhaps somebody may find out. For, mark this. The essence of the cure for warts is to touch the wart with a substance afterwards allowed to decay, and the wart is expected to vanish just in proportion as the substance which has touched it, and which is now no longer in contact with it, decays. This is a principle of treatment not by any means confined

by the peasant-doctor to warts. Take another case. In September 1892, a fashionably dressed young woman was one day seen hovering about a physician's residence in the north of Berlin. When he went out, she met him, and timidly prayed him to take her, when he had an opportunity, to a dead body. He thought she must be suffering from overstrain or mental disorder, and brusquely refused her. In nowise daunted, however, she begged him earnestly to grant her request, explaining that her object was to remove a deformity. As she said this, she laid bare a delicate white hand blemished by a bony outgrowth, known among surgeons as *exostosis*. The medical man became interested; and it was not long before he stood with her in the presence of a corpse. The lady grasped the cold right hand, and with it repeatedly and silently stroked the ugly excrescence. Then, without speaking, she left the room in all haste; nor was the physician able to learn who she was, or what had led her to seek this means of relief.*

The cure of superficial diseases, like scrofula, wens, and swollen glands, by the touch of a corpse is well known. And that its virtue lay, not in the cold contact, but in the decay which the dead hand was about to undergo, and which was believed to affect the disease touched by the hand, is shown

* *Berliner Tageblatt* 18th September 1892

by a practice in Donegal. There, when you meet a funeral, if you are troubled with warts, you can get rid of them by simply throwing some clay from under your right foot in the path by which the funeral is going, and saying as you do so : " Corpse of clay, carry my warts away."* In this case the wart is not itself touched by the corpse ; but the clay thrown may come in contact with the corpse ; and doubtless in older days it was first applied to the warts, and then placed on, or under, the dead body. The ceremony has become mutilated in the process of civilisation ; but the ritual words, which indicate its intention, remain. So, an English cure for boils was to poultice for three days and nights and then to place the poultices, cloths and all, in the coffin of a body about to be buried.†

Let us take another example, where the object is not to cause decay and disappearance, but health and new vigour. When children are born with infantile hernia, it is still not a very uncommon remedy in country places to pass the babe at sunrise through a young ash-tree, split open for the purpose. I need not trouble you with the details of the ceremony, except to say that the tree is immediately afterwards bound up again and

* Professor Haddon in *Folk-lore* (the Transactions of the Folk-lore Soc.), vol. iv. p. 355.

† Thiselton-Dyer, *English Folk-lore*, p. 171

plastered with mud or clay, in the hope that it will grow together once more, as it generally does. Its recovery is watched with some anxiety, because upon it depends the child's recovery; and it is believed that the child's life and health depend thenceforth upon the life and health of the tree. So far is this belief carried that a friend of mine who caused one such tree to be taken up by the roots and placed in the museum in the county town of a neighbouring county was threatened by the child's father, who declared he would shoot him for it. You will find this remedy mentioned in that delightful English classic, White's *Natural History of Selborne*; and if you go further back you can trace it to Marcellus of Bordeaux, a learned writer on medicine at the beginning of the fifth century, who was physician to no less a personage than the Roman Emperor Theodosius I., and who gravely prescribes it in such cases. In his time a cherry was considered the proper tree for the purpose. The exact kind of tree, however, differs in different countries; and no doubt they are all equally beneficial. For infantile hernia is a condition of body which constantly tends to improve and to cure itself without any treatment hence the remedy is usually successful.

But what I want you to notice is that, since the child's life and health depend upon the life and health of the tree, the condition of the tree becomes

an index of the condition of the child. The mutual contact of the child and the tree has united them so closely that they have become, as it were, parts of one another, like the Siamese twins. Henceforward, separate and distinct as they are to *our* eyes, in the eyes of the peasant neither of them has really an independent existence. This is a belief which, of course, is only implicit in his mind. He is not conscious of it, because he does not reason the matter out. He simply adheres to the traditional rites and opinions of his forefathers; and they have been for ages in a state of decay. Yet it seems probable that there was a time when, strange and impossible as we may think it, nobody was held to have an individual existence. The idea of individual existence—the notion that every man, woman, and child is a distinct and separate entity, which can be treated by itself, apart from any other—seems to be quite a modern growth in civilisation and in thought, however self-evident it may seem to us, and however absurd the contrary. Among savages, the unit of society is not the individual, but the clan. By *the clan* I do not mean the whole tribe to which the individual savage belongs, but his kindred. The *tribe* is a local organisation, which may include many kindreds or clans; and, on the other hand, the kindred or clan frequently extends beyond the bounds of the local tribe. But wherever it is found, the clan or

kindred is regarded as one single entity : not a corporation, for a corporation is an abstract legal creation of civilised life, though it has perhaps grown up out of the ancient clan. The members of the clan are regarded as members one of another, in a very literal sense, just as you regard your limbs. When a member of the clan has been slain, the others say, not : " The blood of So-and-so has been spilt," but " *Our* blood has been spilt." The injury is felt by the entire kindred ; and it is the business of the entire kin to avenge it. And not only so, but every member of the clan is responsible for a wrong committed by any of them. This is the origin of the *vendetta* as practised in the South of Europe, and by savages everywhere. An interesting trial for murder took place nine or ten years ago in Dalmatia. Two brothers, having quarrelled with a neighbour about some goats, threw themselves upon him with their daggers ; but he defended himself with his pistol, and having killed one, was tried for murder. The jury properly acquitted him, on the ground that he was only acting in self-defence. Hardly had he left the prison when his surviving assailant, with another brother, hastened to his house. They found there only their foe's wife and daughters ; and they waited and watched. Soon they espied his younger brother, a boy of fourteen, carrying a pitcher of water. Crying " The devil threw thee in our way,"

they seized him, and stabbed him so quickly that he had no time even to cry out. They were speedily arrested, tried, found guilty of murder, and condemned, the one to death, and the other to eighteen years' penal servitude. They protested against the sentence, and appealed to the Court of Cassation at Vienna. There their counsel had the assurance to plead that "in Dalmatia it is every man's duty to take vengeance where blood has been shed; and that the people feel it right to pursue a family, one of whose members has killed a connection of their own, as long as there is a male descendant." This was a little more than a civilised court of justice could stand; and the sentences were confirmed, in the hope of teaching the Dalmatian savages that the unity of the kin is not a doctrine of modern jurisprudence.* Yet even these Dalmatian savages had progressed a little way towards civilisation; for you will have noted that they would not take a woman's life. A little lower down in the scale vengeance is not so choice. In the Fiji islands the theory was thus explained by an old resident to Mr. Fison, in reference to a bloody feud which had lasted for years, and which arose out of the shooting of a dog: "It's just like this, sir: in a manner o' speakin', say as me and Tom Farrell here has a

* *The Daily News*, 14th July 1894.

difficulty, and gets to punchin' one another. If he plugs me in the eye, I don't feel duty bound to hit him back azackly on the same spot. If I can get well in on him anywheres handy, I ain't partickler. And that's how these niggers reckons it."*

I might cite case after case to show you, not only from the *vendetta*, or blood-feud, but also from many other customs and institutions, ay, and ceremonies, practised both by savages and by the uneducated classes of Europe, and even by the educated classes in many parts of the world, how the individual is regarded merely as a portion of the clan, having no rights apart from it, and in fact no separate existence, and how this idea of separate existence and individual rights and responsibilities has been a slow growth in the evolution of human civilisation. To treat the subject so as to give you the steps in the argument and to illustrate them by proofs would require volumes. I ventured a year or two ago to write a volume on it, and I don't pretend to have treated the subject fully.† If, however, you will for the moment take my word for it, and assume that members of a kin, who perhaps may never have seen one another and never even have heard of one another, are believed to be so closely united,

* Fison and Howitt, *Kamilaroi and Kurnai*, p. 157, note.

† *The Legend of Perseus*, vol. ii.

you will not find it difficult to understand that from intimate contact, such as arises when a child is passed through the very vitals of a young tree, there may, in savage and peasant contemplation, spring an union quite as deep and intricate and permanent. When an adventurous traveller goes into the African forests, and desires to form a league of friendship with some powerful chief, he enters into the blood-covenant with him. Blood is drawn from the traveller's arm and from the chief's arm, and mixed and drunk by both parties, or smeared upon one another's flesh. From that moment the traveller becomes akin to the chief; they are bound to one another just as if they were the children of one mother; they become a part of one another; savage kindred with *all* its consequences is imposed upon them; though the traveller, if he be wise, rarely stays to enter upon many of its duties. The simple contact of the blood has conferred the status of kinship upon both parties and upon all their kindred. This may even be done by accident. Dr. Livingstone was once called in to treat a Balonda woman for a tumour in the arm. In opening the tumour, some of her blood spurted into his eye. She immediately remarked: "You were a friend before; now you are a blood-relation." And in saying this she was perfectly serious.*

* Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, p. 489.

In the same way you may unite yourself to a god. Any portion of your body, such as a lock of your hair, or part of your clothing, or even something which has only touched your hand, suspended upon the object of worship, keeps you, so long as it remains there, in continual union with your god. Greek boys and girls, on arriving at adult life, or before marriage, used to dedicate locks of their hair at the shrines of various gods. Athenian women used to hang up their girdles in the temple of Artemis. This is the origin of the votive offerings you may see by the thousand in churches on the Continent. The wax models of limbs or babies are not merely thank-offerings. They secure the divine influence upon the originals, because they, and through them the originals, are in continual contact with the saint or divine being. I do not mean to say that this notion is always present now to the minds of the people who deposit these offerings. They often do it because it is the customary and proper thing to do; but none the less the origin of the practice is clear.

In West Africa when a man prays to an idol (a fetish, as it is often improperly called) he hammers a nail into it. Not a very reverent way of treating your god; but it only means to keep the god in constant touch with you. You feel safer then. There is a West African god in the British Museum bristling with nails; and Miss Kingsley,

the author of *Travels in West Africa*, left to the Pitt-Rivers Museum at Oxford a remarkable specimen, loaded with nails and various other pieces of iron stuck into it in all directions. For the same reason, people drop pins into wishing-wells, or tear shreds from their garments and fasten them on the bushes or trees which overhang the well. The well and the bush are (or were) sacred. They were a god in the olden time, or at least the manifestations of a powerful spirit. *Now* the practice is continued merely from habit. But the habit, like all habits, had once a reason, good or bad; and the reason was the desire for union with a supernatural being.

If, however, it can do you so much good to deposit a part of yourself upon the god; on the other hand, if some such part of you as a lock of hair, the paring of your nail, a piece of your food or a rag of your clothes, get into the possession of an evil-disposed person, an enemy or witch, no end of damage can be done to you. For just in the same way as relatives are, in the savage view, parts of one another, affected by everything that is done to either of them, so any part of your person or clothing, or even your property, though to outward appearance detached, is still in union with you, and so much in union, that anything which affects it affects you. In New England a few years since, a man had his foot crushed in a rail-

way accident ; and it was necessary to cut it off. His friends held a solemn consultation as to what was to be done with the amputated limb. If it were buried, the stump would continue to be painful, and the unfortunate man would be troubled by disagreeable sensations, until the foot had entirely decayed away. So they resolved to burn it ; and burn it they did, to save him from this inconvenience. In Sussex, when a man cuts his hair, the clippings must not be carelessly thrown away, for if a bird were to find any of them and work them into its nest, the man would suffer from headache until it had finished. Or in case a toad got hold of a girl's long back hairs, it would be quite enough to give her a cold in her head.*

Witches are more serious still ; and all over the world, among peoples in what is called the lower culture, the greatest care is taken to prevent hair, nails, and other portions of the body, or garments and things that have touched the body, from getting into the possession of a conjurer. This is why lovers in their tenderest moments exchange locks of hair. It is the most touching proof of confidence they can give. They are henceforth in the power of one another for good or evil, for the faithless one is so easily punished.

* Hartland, *Legend of Perseus*, vol. ii. p. 132.

In some parts of England a girl forsaken by her lover is advised to boil the lock of his hair, and keep it boiling; for whilst it is simmering in the pot, he is simmering too, and can get no rest. Here let me advise any young lady who has a suitor she does not care for, not on any account to give him a lock of her hair. A tale is told in Corsica of a girl who would not listen to a poor young man. The disconsolate youth prayed her at least to give him a single hair which he might treasure in memory of her. She was, however, too clever for him. She pulled a hair out of a camel-hair sieve which hung on a nail in the kitchen, and sent him that. In the dead of night he worked a charm on the precious hair, and waited, in expectation that the maiden would appear, compelled by his incantation. By-and-by a bumping and fumbling was heard at the door. With beating heart he rushed to open it, when there bounced into his arms not the lady of his love, but the sieve.* In Africa the superstition is quite common; and of course the negro has carried it to America. A lady, writing about half a century ago on the island of Antigua, relates that a negro boy had been drowned. One of his kinswomen had had a quarrel with an acquaintance. She contrived to cut off some hair from her acquaint-

* *Revue des Traditions Populaires*, vol. ix. p. 462.

ance's head; and this she put in the dead boy's hand, just before his coffin was screwed down, whispering in his ear the word: "Remember!" The negro who told the tale said: "De pic'nee jumby [that is, the boy's ghost] trouble he [namely, the lady who had lost the hair] so dat he no know war for do, till at last he go out of he head, an' he neber been no good since." And a powerful negro conjurer told a friend of mine: "I could save you, or ruin you, if I could get hold of so much as an eye-winker, or the pealing of one freckle." *

Well, the cure for warts with which we started has led us a long way. But I hope I have succeeded in showing you that it is not entirely foolish; that it is not founded on nothing, but on a philosophy that goes very deep down into savage life, and that crops up in the most unexpected way right in the midst of civilised life, and explains a great variety of practices. I know there are great gaps in my demonstration. That is because the subject is a large one; and they cannot be helped. You cannot put a gallon of beer into a pint pot.

I might go through a long list of beliefs and practices you may still find among the peasantry of the British Islands, and show you how one after another was the decayed representative of some part

* I have cited these and many other instances of the superstition in *The Legend of Perseus*, vol. ii.

of the religion or the philosophy of our ancestors far away in those misty prehistoric ages, when they dwelt in caves, or in huts, amid the rocks and the marshes, or in great camps, the remains of which are yet visible on the heights around us. And I think I should be able to make it clear that these beliefs and practices are not arbitrary or capricious, but the logical result of principles accepted by a people in the state of savagery as the explanation of the mystery of the great world in which they found themselves, and which yet puzzles the wisest heads among us. But we pride ourselves on being a practical nation; and I feel that I can hope to excite only a languid interest in the study of folklore, unless I can offer you some suggestions of the way in which it may be turned to useful account. Let me take it as an axiom that there is no science—no branch of methodised knowledge, that is—that has not its practical application. When Franklin, playing with his kite in a thunder-storm, brought down sparks from the heavens, he was learning the accidence of that science of Electricity which has given us the Telegraph and Telephone, and which has in store for future generations a power we can hardly as yet conceive. But how many men of his generation were there who did not regard his experiments as mere amusement, unworthy of the attention of serious persons? Priestley, turning from the bewilder-

ments of theology to trifle with “dephlogisticated air,” was helping to lay the foundations of modern Chemistry, to which we owe so much. So, when Professor Tylor, then unknown to fame, gave himself up to the eccentric study of savage life and savage ideas which issued in those two great works, the *Early History of Mankind* and *Primitive Culture*, nothing would have seemed more unlikely than that his inquiries were to lead to results of value to the maintenance and prosperity of the British Empire. When we consider, however, not merely the vast extent, but the almost infinite diversity of races in all stages of culture, over which we rule—when we recall how impossible it is to govern any people properly unless you understand the ideas and the motives that actuate them, and are able by means of your knowledge to anticipate in some measure their feelings, and to sympathise with them—how important then becomes the effort to grasp the significance of their customs and beliefs, their prejudices and their ideals! Who would have imagined that the obscure and technical details of the land tenure of the aboriginal tribes of India could throw any light upon the condition of Ireland? Yet it is hardly too much to say that, if we had been in possession of India at the time when the conquest and settlements of Ireland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries took place, and had then understood as we now understand

the land tenures of India, there would have been no Irish Land Question to worry us to-day. We went in with a rough hand and broke up the fabric of Irish society, imposing upon the land the incongruous feudal theories of English law. We did this, not because we desired to do injustice, but because the Elizabethan lawyers were utterly ignorant of any system of law beside their own. We went to India, and found a state of things in relation to the ownership of land so different from that to which we had been accustomed that at first we were baffled; nor was it without careful and long-continued study, and many mistakes, that we succeeded in comprehending its principles. And then, scholars, turning to the old Irish laws, discovered that on this point the Irish traditions and the traditions of the aborigines of India presented so many traits in common that it might fairly be said the systems were the same. They threw at once a flood of light upon one another. Both were systems of customary law; both were rooted in a common philosophy of the essential unity of the kin; and its consequence, the common ownership by the kin, was the same in both. Our own system, although we did not know it, grew up out of similar conditions; but they had been long disturbed and distorted by the vicissitudes of our earlier history and overlaid by our developing civilisation. Traces of them, however, are still to

be met with up and down the country. Indeed, the open fields of Upton St. Leonard's are a remnant, battered and decayed, of course, of such a state of society and thought; and we cannot fully explain their existence without seeking help from the Brehon laws of Ireland and the folklore, not merely of India, but of other savage races.*

Again, what waste of precious human lives might have been avoided in our manifold dealings with tribes in the lower culture if we had been acquainted with their modes of thought! Collisions between white men and savages often occur, and are perhaps unavoidable, from theft and other offences on the part of the savages, and from summary punishment—revenge, rather—on the part of the white men, and from recklessness and sheer cruelty on the part of settlers, traders, and sailors. But these are by no means the only causes. A well-known missionary tells how he and another landed

* The parish of Upton St. Leonard's, near Gloucester, preserved several features of archaic life. Of these the open fields were the most conspicuous; but, alas! an order of the Board of Agriculture has at length permitted their enclosure. The rights of the parties have been settled; many of the open lands have now (1904) been actually enclosed; houses are arising upon them; and in a few months, or a year or two at most, these relics of an earlier state of society will be themselves things of the past. On the subject of the open field system, see *The Village Community*, by G. L. Gomme (Walter Scott, 1890).

on one of the South Sea Islands, called Aneiteum, and, walking about, came to a hut, which they were about to enter, when half a dozen voices called to them to stop. They then learnt that in the hut was a pig, being fattened for an approaching feast, and the hut was consequently tabooed to strangers. Now *Taboo* is one of the most powerful institutions among the Polynesians; and it has given a word to the English language. Anything on which a taboo is set is thereby rendered sacred, *anathema*. Nobody can touch it or approach it under the severest penalties, often nothing less than death. So it was death for a stranger to go near a pig when it was being fed in anticipation of a feast. And had the missionaries been ignorant of the language, the probability is that they would have violated the taboo and been slain in consequence.*

The blood-feud, or vendetta, which I have already explained, is responsible for the loss of many lives in the intercourse between white men and savages. For, as I have shown you, it is not necessary to retaliate upon the very man who commits the crime. Any of his kindred will do as well. If, therefore, a quarrel arise between white strangers and the natives, and any of the natives be killed, the death of any white man who may be thrown among the survivors is deemed only just and equitable; and

* Turner, *Nineteen Years in Polynesia*, p. 370.

this will be repeated until the number of strangers put to death equals the number of the natives killed. Civilised men, not understanding this law, have regarded the natives merely as bloodthirsty savages, and have made not less bloody reprisals, which have only perpetuated the feud and led to more terrible results.

The mention of missionaries leads me to say how lamentable it is that missionaries should be sent out, as they are by all our missionary societies, utterly ignorant of the customs and beliefs of the peoples whom they are going to try to convert to Christianity. At one time there was an excuse for their ignorance, for they only shared it with every one else in Europe. But there is none now, when so much is known about most savage and barbarous races. Let me give you an example of the quandary in which a missionary ignorant on these matters may find himself. One who laboured among the Australian aborigines on the Murray River relates that when he first went among them one of the young men took a fancy to him and adopted him as a brother. It is not quite clear from the narrative whether he went through any ceremony; but probably he did, as he and the young native regarded themselves afterwards as brothers. "I one day," he tells us, "said to his wife: 'I am John's brother; you are my sister.' The idea was, to her, most ridiculous. With a

laugh she said : ' No, you are my husband ! ' " * This is an excellent illustration of the length to which the doctrine of the unity of the kin is carried by some savages : even to absolute oneness. The missionary of course had no notion of this : it was one of the things he ought to have known at starting, if he were to avoid needless difficulties ; one of the things he had slowly to learn by experience—in this instance ludicrous, but experience that might in easily conceivable circumstances have been tragic. The fact is that such knowledge is not less necessary to Christian enterprise than to good government and successful commercial intercourse.

Again. Theologians trained in civilised life, with the heritage of three thousand years of metaphysical subtleties, forget that the savage mind is unused to their modes of thought, and quite unfitted to grasp their conceptions or to find its way among their distinctions. They start with the notion that all the traditions of the heathen are the suggestions of the devil, or the vile and abominable inventions of fallen human nature, instead of being, as they are, the evidence of the upward strivings of humanity from its primitive condition. Hence, they consider that they have nothing to do with heathen customs but to stamp them out, and to impose their own instead. Not having any

* Fison and Howitt, *op. cit.* p. 289.

common ground of sympathy to base their appeals upon, their work is retarded. They too often succeed only in creating confusion, relaxing the bonds of morality which they find, without effectually substituting any new ones.

In saying this I do not wish to depreciate their noble and self-denying labours. I sympathise profoundly with their efforts. I only want to point out that their methods are not always the wisest, because they are ignorant, and therefore clumsy, methods. This opinion is supported by a vast mass of evidence, of which I will only quote the latest—that given by Miss Kingsley in her *Travels in West Africa*. “Taken as a whole,” she says, “the missionaries must be regarded as superbly brave, noble-minded men who go and risk their own lives, and often those of their wives and children, and definitely sacrifice their personal comfort and safety to do what, from their point of view, is their simple duty; but it is their methods of working that have produced in West Africa the results which all truly interested in West Africa must deplore; and one is bound to make an admission that goes against one’s insular prejudice—that the Protestant English missionaries have had most to do with rendering the African useless.” “The missionary,” she goes on to say, “to the African has done what my father found them doing to the Polynesians—‘regarding the native minds as so

many jugs only requiring to be emptied of the stuff that is in them and refilled with the particular form of dogma he is engaged in teaching, in order to make them the equals of the white race.' " * He forgets that Christianity is, if not the product of, at least inseparably bound up with, a high form of civilisation; and the savage is not fitted for it without long years, and perhaps generations, of training, which must begin on the missionary's part by a complete understanding of and sympathy with the native, and by a gradual process must lift the native up out of his abject condition at one and the same time into Christianity and civilisation. Of course the better and wiser missionaries fully recognise this. I need only mention the names of William Ellis, William Wyatt Gill, Duff Macdonald, James Sibree, Dr. Codrington, and Dr. Callaway, as types of a class to which the cause of humanity, as well as that of science, owes a deep debt of gratitude. Would that all were such as these!

Here let me say in passing that it is a disgrace to our Government that there is no public institution to which a young man who is going out, either as a Government official in one of our numerous dependencies, or as a missionary, can go to be instructed in Anthropology. Alone, or almost alone,

* Miss Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa*, p. 659.

among civilised Governments, ours does nothing to promote the study of savage races. Others have colleges for training in anthropological subjects, or at least a Department of State, like the Bureau of Ethnology at Washington, for the systematic collection and comparison of everything which may throw light on the tribes beneath their sway. Our indifference and contempt, on the other hand, are carried so far, that it is the universal testimony of Government officials that interest in the subject peoples is absolutely discouraged. An official who is known to undertake such inquiries is regarded as a trifler, and is a marked man. He can never look forward to promotion. And yet, ruling as we do over a greater variety of nationalities than any other European people, it is beyond comparison more to our advantage than to that of any other thoroughly to understand the workings of the native mind. It requires but little insight to be assured that we might enormously strengthen our hold upon India if our Government were to take a different line, and were to encourage, instead of discouraging, civil and military officials to inquire systematically into and report upon the ideas and practices of the races of that vast continent. Soldiers in particular have time on their hands, which they too often waste in idleness with all the evils that attend it. How much better it would be if they were given to understand that they were

expected to take an intelligent and scientific interest in the humanity about them, and that substantial contributions to our information on the subject would be taken into consideration in reckoning their services to the Empire! Intelligent and scientific interest would lead to sympathy. The natives would be more wisely treated, treated like human beings, instead of, as they too often are, like dogs. And the popularity of our rule and our consequent power would be multiplied a hundred-fold.

Of our Colonial Governors, only one has taken up the matter seriously—Sir William MacGregor, lately Governor of British New Guinea. But his testimony is express. “Ever since the declaration of sovereignty,” he says, “as much attention as possible has been given to the peculiar usages, customs, and habits of the natives. It has been felt that no man, or body of men, can rule justly and wisely a people with whose customs, usages, and inner life they are unacquainted. In legislation and in executive administration it is imperative that, in a country such as this is, with a mere handful of Europeans and a numerous savage and semi-savage population, the officers of the Government should not only become acquainted with the hereditary and traditional customs of the natives, but that they should also know their superstitions, their aims, their inter-tribal family and domestic

polity, and even their prejudices.”* Golden words. We can only hope that Sir William MacGregor’s tenure of office continued long enough to impress this principle as a lasting tradition upon the Government of British New Guinea, and that his example may speedily be followed elsewhere.

But you will tell me: “All this is very remote

* *Colonial Reports*, No. 131, British New Guinea, p. 34. Since this essay was first published (1899), an attempt has been made by my friend Prof. Haddon to start anthropological classes at Cambridge for intending missionaries and others, with what results it is yet too early to say. Moreover, Lord Curzon has arranged for an Ethnographical Survey of India, which is now proceeding under the direction of Mr. H. H. Risley. The Queensland Government is publishing a most valuable series of researches on the aborigines of that colony by Mr. W. E. Roth, who holds an official position as Protector of Aborigines in Northern Queensland. It is also continuing the inquiries set on foot by Sir W. MacGregor in British New Guinea. The government of the French Colony of the Ivory Coast, W. Africa, has, for the specific purpose of utilising the native customs in the administration of the colony, obtained and published official returns embodying a quantity of information as to the customs and laws of the tribes under its sway. A commission of inquiry for similar purposes into the laws and customs of the natives of the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony, urged by the Anthropological Institute and the Folk-lore Society supported by a number of distinguished scientific men, was *refused* by Mr. Chamberlain.

from us. We are neither Government officials nor missionaries. What is the value of folk-lore to *us* ?”

Well, what I have been saying about Government officials and missionaries applies—in a lesser degree, it is true, but yet applies—to everybody who has to do—and who has not?—with the peasantry and the uneducated classes of our own countrymen. The more perfect your interest in and your sympathy with them, the more completely you can identify yourselves with their modes of thought, the greater your influence for good upon them. The conflict of the classes and the masses about which we hear so much to-day is all the bitterer because of the chasm which education has opened between high and low. Three hundred years ago the upper classes, as they are called, thought and felt much more nearly like their poorer brethren than now. They accepted the same superstitions; they looked at the world with the same eyes. It is true we are doing our best to diminish the distance that has grown between the educated and uneducated. But it takes time; and depend upon it it is worth while trying to condescend to the lower level, in order the more quickly to raise up those who are there to your own.

Then I have tried to show you that the ideas of “the folk” have an interest of their own.

Properly studied, they unveil the past of the human race in a way for which we look in vain in the material monuments of antiquity. The legends and practices localised here and there all over the country glorify many a fair hillside, many a majestic building, many a sombre ruin, and lend an additional charm to our holidays and our travels. Amazing to us is the veneration once paid to the body of Edward II. in Gloucester Cathedral, amazing are the stories that grew up around it. Not the least amazing is the tradition that he was drawn from Berkeley Castle to his grave by white harts. That was a tradition that grew up in accordance with a law of the human mind revealed by folklore; but it is not for me now to strain your patience by recounting other examples even in this country.

Nor is it only our summer holidays that may be rendered more attractive by the study of folklore. As we sit by the fire in the long winter evenings and read the masterpieces of literature, as I hope some of us sometimes do, we cannot appreciate even these without some knowledge of the ideas current at the time they were written. Take down the mighty Shakespeare, and perhaps you think you can enjoy *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as the audience for whom he wrote it enjoyed it, without concerning yourself about the silly fairy

beliefs of our ancestors. But let me ask you What do you know about Robin Goodfellow? Do you imagine that Robin Goodfellow—a mere name to you—conveys anything like the meaning to your mind that it did to those for whom the name represented a still living belief, and who had the stories about him at their fingers' ends? Or let me ask you Why did the fairies dance on moonlight nights? or Have you ever thought why it is that in English literature, and in English literature alone, the fairy realm finds a place in the highest works of imagination? As my predecessor, Mr. Alfred Nutt, in one of his presidential addresses to the Folk-lore Society, eloquently said :

“We could not blot out from English poetry its visions of the fairyland without a sense of irreparable loss. No other literature save that of Greece alone can vie with ours in its pictures of the land of fantasy and glamour, or has brought back from that mysterious realm of unfading beauty treasures of more exquisite and enduring charm.” What is the reason of this rare distinction? For answers to such questions you must go to folklore.

But there is one literature of more profound and far-reaching influence than even English literature. I refer to the Hebrew literature contained in the Bible. It is full of tales, of

allusions to custom, and of descriptions of ritual, which can only be explained by folklore. More than this, what is called "the Higher Criticism" has demonstrated by consideration of the internal evidence that many of the books of the Old Testament are of a much later date than they were long supposed to be, though often embodying, revising, and otherwise manipulating earlier materials, either written or oral. All commentators of repute are practically agreed upon this. Even the most orthodox and conservative are too learned and too candid—too judicial, in a word—to deny altogether the force of the destructive criticism that has riddled the old position through and through, or to refuse their assent entirely to its methods and many of its results. It is merely a question of less or more, or this or that particular conclusion. It is generally recognised that theological arguments have no validity against literary and historical evidence. They are not in the same plane; they do not deal with the same subject-matter. If then, for example, we are no longer to accept the Pentateuch as written by Moses, if the narrative be nothing more than a collection of traditions worked up in various ways by various writers, and more than once re-edited, if it be not in the strict sense of the term historical, what are we to say of the laws? Here it is that folk-lore helps us. The distinction

between clean and unclean animals; the ordinance that he who touched a dead body, or even came into the same tent with it, should be impure and unable to go into the sanctuary for seven days, and until the priest had sprinkled him with the water of separation; the decree that, when a man died childless, his brother should take his widow, in the hope of continuing the family of the deceased—these are ancient customs, far more ancient than any date which can be assigned to Moses, world-wide, or based upon ideas that are world-wide; and for them and many others folklore, and folk-lore alone, has an adequate explanation. In fact, the great mass of Hebrew customs and a considerable proportion of Hebrew stories are neither more nor less than the particular national form assumed by customs and stories and superstitions which are common to mankind, and inevitably arise in certain stages of civilisation. Science has not yet solved every question in connection with the history of Hebrew myths and customs; but the late Professor Robertson Smith, in his great fragment on *The Religion of the Semites*, has led the way; and enough has been done to show that we are on the right path. Every new discovery helps us forward; and researches in Hebrew civilisation will at no distant day be brought into line with those in other departments of the Science of Man.

I must apologise for detaining you so long. I hope I have not wearied you in trying to show you that the science of Folklore is one of real importance, full of interest, full of surprises to those who are unacquainted with it. It has vast possibilities that will revolutionise our conceptions of human history. Already it has co-operated with prehistoric archæology to establish beyond cavil that civilisation has been evolved through long centuries of struggle from a low form of savagery. What is behind that primitive condition it leaves to other sciences to say. And it has rendered clear that, underlying all differences of race and nationality, we have a common human nature, common to the savage Tasmanian or Bushman and the cultivated Englishman, a common mental constitution which reasons everywhere on the same principles, though it may not attain everywhere to the same results, because it does not start from the same premises. Folklore has lent a new emphasis to the truth enshrined in the ancient declaration that God "made of one every nation of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

IN case any readers of the foregoing paper may be sufficiently interested to pursue the subject, I append a list of a few books which they will find helpful. This list is not intended to be exhaustive. It only aims at guiding such as wish to obtain a general view of the scope and method of Folklore. Readers who desire more than this will not be long in discovering from the works named below hints for further research.

"The Handbook of Folk-lore." Edited by George Laurence Gomme, F.S.A., 1890. Out of print. New edition in preparation.

[One of the publications of the Folk-lore Society. It affords a general view of the study, with hints on collecting and the scientific work to be done.]

"Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilisation," by Edward B. Tylor, D.C.L., LL.D., F.R.S. London, John Murray, 3rd ed., 1878.

'Primitive Culture ; Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom,' by the same. Same publisher. 2 vols., 1st ed., 1871 ; 4th ed., 1903.

[In these two works Dr. Tylor laid the foundation of the scientific study of the evolution of human ideas and civilisation.]

"Custom and Myth," by Andrew Lang, M.A. London, Longmans, 1884.

"Myth, Ritual, and Religion," by the same. Same publishers. 2 vols., 1st ed., 1887. 2nd ed., 1899.

[In the latter of these two works Mr. Lang, applying Professor Tylor's method of inquiry, demolished once for all the theories of the philological school of Mythologists, represented in this country primarily by Professor Max Müller. In the new edition, however, he has embodied some hypotheses, expressed first in his recent book on *The Making of Religion*, which do not command unqualified assent.]

- "The Golden Bough: a Study in Magic and Religion," by J. G. Frazer, M.A. 2 vols. London, Macmillan, 1890. 2nd ed., 3 vols., 1900.

[A study in detail of some profoundly interesting aspects of savage religion.]

- "The Blood Covenant: a Primitive Rite and its Bearings on Scripture," by H. Clay Trumbull, D.D. London, Redway, 1887.

- "Lectures on the Religion of the Semites. First Series: The Fundamental Institutions." By W. Robertson Smith, M.A., LL.D. Edinburgh, A. & C. Black, 1889. 2nd ed., 1894.

[These two books contain the first intelligible account of the theory of the Blood-Covenant and Sacrifice. The relations of the god to his worshippers, holy places and objects are, among other important subjects, treated of in *The Religion of the Semites*.]

- "The Legend of Perseus: a Study of Tradition in Story, Custom and Belief." By Edwin Sidney Hartland, F.S.A. 3 vols. London, D. Nutt, 1894-1896.

[I venture to include this, because the second volume, dealing with the Life-token, sets out fully the reasoning of the earlier part of the foregoing paper, and pursues the subject in directions not touched on above.]

- "Ethnology in Folk lore," by George Laurence Gomme, F.S.A. London, Kegan Paul & Co., Limited, 1892.

[The main object of this little book is to determine

the value of folklore as evidence of race ; but, under the head of the Localisation of Primitive Belief, it includes an account of the worship at sacred wells and trees.]

“ An Introduction to Folk-lore,” by Marian Roalfe Cox. London, D. Nutt, 1895.

[A popular introduction written in a lively and pleasant style.]

Generally, the publications of the Folk-lore Society, of which “ The Handbook of Folk-lore ” has already been mentioned. Among those bearing on the subject of this paper may be mentioned :

“ Folk-Medicine : a chapter in the History of Culture,” by William George Black, F.S.A. Scot., 1883.

And numerous articles in

“ Folk-lore ” (the Transactions of the Society). Fourteen volumes published, 1890-1903, still proceeding.

It may be added that all the numbers of the series of *Popular Studies*, of which the foregoing paper forms one, bear more or less directly upon the subject of Folklore, and attempt to elucidate the principles on which the study of the beliefs, institutions, and literature of peoples in early stages of culture, including those of our own forefathers, should proceed.

The Folk-Lore Society

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- No. 10. THE ROMANCE CYCLE OF CHARLEMAGNE AND HIS PEERS. By JESSIE L. WESTON.
- No. 11. THE MABINOGION. By IVOR B. JOHN, M.A.,
Fellow of the University of Wales.
- No. 12. THE EDDA: I. THE DIVINE MYTHOLOGY OF THE NORTH. By WINIFRED FARADAY, M.A.
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- No. 13. THE EDDA: II. THE HEROIC MYTHOLOGY OF THE NORTH. By WINIFRED FARADAY, M.A.
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Bran" (Essays on the Irish Vision of
the Happy Otherworld and The Celtic
Doctrine of Rebirth)

Published by David Nutt, London
1899

*The present study is largely based upon the Introductions and Appendices which I have contributed to Vols. II., III., IV. of **Waifs and Strays of Celtic Tradition**, Argyllshire Series. These are as follows:*

*In Vol. II., **Folk- and Hero Tales**, collected by the Rev. D. MacInnes, 1890.*

Study on the Development of the Ossianic Saga and copious Notes on the separate Tales.

*In Vol. III., **Folk- and Hero Tales**, collected by the Rev. J. MacDougall, 1891.*

Introduction (dealing chiefly with the relation between the modern folk-tale and the older literature).

*In Vol. IV., **The Fians**, by the Rev. J. G. Campbell, 1891.*

Introduction (dealing chiefly with Prof. II. Zimmer's theory of the Ninth Century date of Finn and the Fenian heroes), Bibliographical Notes.

*Whilst I have striven to give the pith of my investigations in the following pages, the volumes of **Waifs and Strays** contain very much that could not be reproduced for want of space, and are indispensable to whoever wishes to make a serious study of the Ossianic literature.*

Special attention is directed to the chronological and bibliographical appendices, which it is hoped will be found useful by students.

ALFRED NUTT.

November 1899

**A List of the Series will be found on page 4
of the Cover.**

OSSIAN AND THE OSSIANIC LITERATURE

“WOODY MORVEN and echoing Sora, and Selma with its silent halls!—we all owe them a debt of gratitude, and when we are unjust enough to forget it, may the Muse forget us!”

These words of Matthew Arnold’s fairly reflect the feelings towards Ossian and the literature connected with his name of such cultivated Englishmen as concern themselves at all with the subject; their knowledge of it is derived from James Macpherson; their appreciation depends upon whether or no they share Arnold’s admiration for the undoubted beauties of his remarkable work; their attitude towards the critical questions involved differs but little from that of the combatants in the great critical battle urged a century ago over the authenticity of the so-called Ossian. As the following pages ignore Macpherson altogether, I must briefly state the opinion held of his work by most competent scholars. He undoubtedly had some knowledge of the Ossianic ballad literature

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existing in the Highlands in his day, and he worked up many of its themes into his English Ossian, which is, however, almost as much his own composition as "Paradise Lost" is the composition of Milton. He suffered himself to maintain the existence of a Gaelic original which he claimed to have rendered faithfully; one was published many years later, but it is probably a mere retranslation into Gaelic of the English Ossian. For the student, whether of Celtic myth and saga, of Celtic archæology, or of Gaelic style and literary form, Macpherson's poems are worthless; they disregard the traditional versions of the legends, they depart from the traditional representation of the material life depicted in the old and genuine texts, and they utterly ignore the traditional conventions of Gaelic style. But Macpherson's flashes of genuine inspiration, and the importance of his work in preparing the romantic movement of the nineteenth century, will always secure for him a high place on the roll of Scottish writers.

Who then is the Ossian and what the Ossianic literature that form the subject of the following pages? It will be convenient to take the latter question first.

The body of Gaelic literature connected with the name of Ossian is of very considerable extent and of respectable antiquity. The oldest texts, prose for the most part, but also in verse, are preserved in Irish

MSS. of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and go back to a period from 150 to 250 years older at least. The bulk of Ossianic literature is, however, of later date as far as the form under which it has come down to us is concerned. A number of important texts, prose for the most part, are preserved in MSS. of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but were probably redacted in the thirteenth and twelfth centuries. But by far the largest mass consists of narrative poems, as a rule dramatic in structure. These have come down to us in MSS. written in Scotland from the end of the fifteenth to the middle of the seventeenth century, in Ireland from the sixteenth down to the middle of the present century. The Gaelic speaking peasantry, alike in Ireland and Scotland, have preserved orally a large number of these ballads, as also a great mass of prose narratives, the heroes of which are Ossian and his comrades. A rough classification may be made into (*a*) pre-mediæval texts (vouched for by MSS. of the twelfth century and earlier), (*b*) mediæval (MSS. of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries) and (*c*) post mediæval texts. Whilst there are marked differences in style and tone between the different sections, as well as between the specific Irish and Scotch versions of the third section, this body of literature is on the whole wonderfully homogeneous: themes, characterisation, personages, *locale*, have undergone scarce

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any change from the eleventh century to the present day.

Were all Ossianic texts preserved in MSS. older than the present century to be printed they would fill some eight to ten thousand 8vo pages. The mere bulk of the literature, even if we allow for considerable repetition of incident, arrests attention. If we further recall that for the last five hundred years this body of romance has formed the chief imaginative recreation of Gaeldom, alike in Ireland and Scotland, and that a peasantry unable to read or write has yet preserved it almost entire, its claims to consideration and study will appear manifest. No literature can, for so many centuries, maintain itself and preserve its plastic vitality without good and sufficient reason. An endeavour to realise the nature of the appeal which this literature made and still makes to the Gaelic race at once brings us to the question—is it wholly a work of imagination, or has it preserved, in howsoever fanciful a form, some record of historic fact? And thus we are led back to our starting point—who were Ossian, and the heroes associated with him?

If we turn to the Irish annals we find that Oisín (the proper spelling of the name phonetically transcribed Ossian by Macpherson, a transcription which I retain for convenience' sake) was the son of Finn mac Cumhail, who is asserted to have been

the leader of a band of professional soldiers and to have lived in the third century of our era. Irish historical writers of the tenth and eleventh centuries record Finn's death, some in 252, some in 283. In so far as an historical thread connects the scattered episodes of the cycle, it is to be found in the rivalry between Finn's band (the Clanna Baoisgne) and the Clanna Morna of which Goll was leader, and in the relations of both bodies to the internecine feuds of the Irish kings. Finn is represented as quarrelling with Cormac, son of Art, the most famous high-king in Irish legend, whose daughter, Grainne, he had married, and the feud thus formed was carried on by the children, culminating ultimately in the battle of Gabhra, in which Cairbre, Cormac's son, and Finn's grandson, Oscar son of Ossian, the Achilles of the cycle, fell at each other's hands. The Fenian host perished almost to the last man in this battle, only a few surviving, with miraculously prolonged life, until the coming of Patrick two centuries later.

How far can this legendary history be accepted as in any sense a genuine record of events? In the first place we must note that it was firmly believed in by Irish historical writers of the eleventh century, men fully abreast of all the learning of their time, by no means devoid of the critical instinct and in possession of great masses of tribal tradition and genealogical record which have

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perished ; on the other hand they lived centuries after the alleged events, they differ considerably among themselves as to the chronology of the cycle, and they were, like all men of the middle ages, unable to examine tradition critically as we moderns do. Fortunately there is little need for me to discuss the credibility or otherwise of the historic records concerning Finn, his family and his band of warriors. They may be accepted or rejected according to individual bent of mind without really modifying our view of the literature. For when we turn to the romances, whether in prose or verse, we find that, although the history is professedly the same as that of the annals, firstly we are transported to a world entirely romantic, in which divine and semi-divine beings, ungainly monsters and giants play a prominent part, in which men and women change shapes with animals, in which the lives of the heroes are miraculously prolonged—in short, we find ourselves in a land of Faery ; secondly, we find that the historic conditions in which the heroes are represented as living do not for the most part answer to anything we know or can surmise of the third century. For Finn and his warriors are perpetually on the watch to guard Ireland against the attacks of oversea-raiders, styled Lochlannach by the narrators and by them undoubtedly thought of as Norsemen. But the latter, as is well known, only came to Ireland at the

close of the eighth century, and the heroic period of their invasions extended for about a century, from 825 to 925 ; to be followed by a period of comparative settlement during the tenth century, until at the opening of the eleventh century the battle of Clontarf, fought by Brian, the great South Irish chieftain, marked the break up of the separate Teutonic organisation and the absorption of the Teutons into the fabric of Irish life. In these pages then we may disregard the otherwise interesting question of historic credibility in the Ossianic romances: firstly, because they have their being in a land unaffected by fact; secondly, because if they ever did reflect the history of the third century, the reflection was distorted in after times, and a pseudo-history based upon events of the ninth and tenth centuries was substituted for it. What the historian seeks for in legend is far more a picture of the society in which it took rise than a record of the events which it commemorates. We shall see presently what traces, if any, of third century custom and manners are preserved by extant texts of the Ossianic cycle.

(a) Pre-mediæval Ossianic Romance.

The pre-mediæval remains of the cycle, contained in MSS. copied in the twelfth and eleventh centuries from earlier MSS., though not very

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numerous are yet numerous enough to furnish prototypes of well-nigh every mode of conceiving the character and presenting the fortunes of the heroes which we find in the modern texts. All the texts which we know definitely to be older than the twelfth century would probably not fill more than one hundred pages, but these hundred pages contain in germ the many thousand pages of the mediæval and post-mediæval literature. These early fragments of the legend (it is seldom we get more than a fragment) are every whit as "romantic" as the later tales and ballads. Indeed the further back we trace these Fenian tales, the more markedly mythical do we find them. A remarkable tale contained in the oldest Irish profane MS., the Book of the Dun Cow, and probably as old as the eighth century, brings Finn, supposed to have died in the third century, to life again as a sixth-century Ulster Kinglet, Mongan. Finn-Mongan has a dispute with Dallan Forgall, chief bard of Ireland, concerning some event of the third century. To substantiate his contention he calls up from the other world Caoilte mac Ronain, the fleetest foot among the Fenian heroes, whose testimony, in favour of the king, is accepted as final. Another long poem, entitled Finn and the Phantoms, tells how Finn in company with Caoilte and Ossian, after outriding their companions whilst hunting, came at nightfall to a house of whose existence in

that district they knew nothing. They were received by a grey giant, a hag with three heads on her thin neck, and a headless man with one eye in his breast; nine bodies rise on one side of the house, nine on the other, and raise nine harsh shrieks—"Not melodious was that concert." The hideous crew attack the heroes, who are sore put to it to defend themselves until sunlight, when the tribe of monsters falls dead on the spot. Again another tale tells how the Fianna of Melgi chase and kill Aige transformed into a deer.

Some of these pre-mediæval texts are specially noteworthy in view of their relation to the later romances. Thus one long poem, put into Finn's mouth, employs that favourite device of Irish story-telling, topographical enumeration; the mention of hills, or streams, or burial mounds, calls forth the appropriate legend for each. As we shall see presently, one of the most important of the later texts is built upon this model. Another poem, also ascribed to Finn, strikes a note which remains dominant throughout the entire range of Ossianic literature, the note of keen and vivid feeling for certain natural conditions. It is a brief description of winter:

"A tale here for you, oxen lowing, winter's snowing, summer's passing; wind from the north, high and cold, low the sun and short his course, wildly tossing the wave of the sea.

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The fern burns deep red. Men wrap themselves closely, the wild goose raises her wonted cry, cold seizes the wing of the bird; 'tis the season of ice; sad my tale!"

A poem ascribed to Caoilte anticipates a very common theme in the later romances. Three strange hunters come oversea bringing with them a hound of the King of Hiruatha (*i.e.* Norway); they slay one of Finn's men, Duban, and the Fianna demand their death, but Finn declares he will accept the hound as compensation. After pledging themselves thereto by sun and moon and sea and earth, the strangers kill the dog and fly, carrying its hide with them, to the north-east, passing Scotland on the way. The Fianna assemble in pursuit and heap up a cairn before starting, each man flinging a stone upon it, whilst old and young swear that they will not retreat until the stone retreat for dread of the foreigners.

Finally the following poem, which is ascribed to Caoilte and figures him as surviving until the time of the Talcend (*i.e.* Patrick, according to a gloss in the MS.), embodies the most famous and characteristic *motif* of Ossianic legend, that which differentiates it from all other bodies of mythic and heroic romance. The hero, in his supernaturally prolonged old age, thus laments the glories of his youth and prime:

Small to-night the vigour of my feet,
 I know my body is flesh ;
 Good was the running of my feet
 Until the Talcend came.

Swift were my feet,
 In my head my eyes kept ward,
 My arms were wont to feed the carrion crow,
 My weapons ne'er lacked a shout of victory.

.

I and Oisin, the son of Finn,
 In unison we dealt our blows.
 Mighty in sooth were our feats,
 Small the boast we made of them.

In 1871, the Rev. J. G. Campbell picked up in Tiree a fragmentary lament for Caoilte, ascribed to Ossian, which runs thus :

Sorrowful am I after Caoilte,
 Since my contemporaries are not alive.
 I am filled with sadness, agony, and pain
 At parting with my foster brother,
 Caoilte, my true foster-brother,
 With whom I could win victory and banner ;
 Caoilte, my perfect fellow-warrior,
 A relief to the Fians in time of need.

The one poem is at least a thousand years old, the other still lives on the lips of the Gaelic peasant, but in tone, sentiment, expression they might be contemporary.

Attention has already been drawn to certain

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aspects of the pre-mediæval Ossianic legend, as presented in texts which must, as we have seen, be at least older than the twelfth century and which may belong in part to a period several centuries earlier. I will now recapitulate those features upon which, for the purposes of this study, I lay special stress. The chief heroes of the legend are Finn himself, his son Ossian and his sister's son Caoilte; the latter is pre-eminently the witness to, and relater of the mighty deeds achieved by himself and his fellow warriors; he, it is, who comes back from the other world to corroborate Finn, re-incarnated as Mongan and living three centuries and a half after the period assigned to him in the annals; he lives on until the days of Patrick and laments his departed strength and his lost comrades. But Ossian also shares this characteristic of supernaturally prolonged life and keen regret for vanished youth; the poem which describes the visit of the three heroes to the Phantoms introduces him as Guaire the blind, contrasting his sad lot with that of his hearers, and it is not until late in the poem that the blind minstrel reveals his identity with the famous son of Finn. Thus the earliest texts of the cycle represent it as miraculously preserved for the edification and delight of after ages; from the outset the legend, thrown back into the past, comes before the Gael as a tale of—

The old days that seem to be
 Much older than any history
 That is written in any book—

and breathes a note of lament and protest. From the outset too we find ourselves in a land of wizardry and shape shifting, a land which even the earliest hearers and tellers of those tales must have felt to be unreal. For the warriors who dwell in this land the chase is of scarce less moment than warfare, they engage in hunts which lead to a realm of glamour and illusion, they come and go over Northern Seas, receiving visits from and paying visits to the far off Scandinavian lands. As is but natural this hunter race is sensitive to the passing moods of Nature, and to the ways of the wild animals they chase.

Besides Caoilte and Ossian, the pre-eminent heroes, after Finn himself, of the earliest texts, we hear of Oscar falling at Gabbra, Oscar whose later fame excels that of any other hero. Goll too, the hard-smiting chief of the Clanna Morna, and Fergus, the poet of the warrior band, are mentioned, as is also another sister's son of Finn, Diarmaid hua Duibne. A tenth century commentator upon an obscure poem of the previous century, has preserved a verse which justifies the conclusion that the famous story of Diarmaid's elopement with Grainne, the wife of Finn, is as old as any portion of the cycle. The commen-

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tator quotes the verse as follows: "As Granne daughter of Cormac, said to Find—

"There lives a man
On whom I would love to gaze long,
For whom I would give the whole world,
O Son of Mary! though a privation!"

The allusion is undoubtedly to Grainne's love for Diarmaid. In the Fenian as in the Arthurian legend the passion of the chief hero's wife for his nephew forms an original and essential element. Here let me note that if the single verse, preserved by a lucky chance, be a fair specimen of the poem ascribed to Grainne and certainly not later than the end of the tenth century, it must have expressed the passion of love with a keen intensity unknown in any contemporary vernacular European literature.

(b) Mediæval Ossianic Romance.

I have briefly sketched the Ossianic literature preserved in the earliest Irish MSS. and undoubtedly older than the twelfth century. The whole may, as I have said, fill some hundred pages of modern print. It can only be a small portion of what was current at the time in Gaeldom; bits and scraps are all that is vouchsafed to us, scarce anything pretending to the name of a saga, a

rounded sequence of incidents. Yet something of the kind must have existed or we cannot explain the presence of the Ossianic texts in the early MSS. For these, compiled as they were for kings and great chiefs, are libraries, containing everything in the way of history, sacred and profane, legend, national and foreign, and didactic teaching with which it was thought essential for a great man to be acquainted. The compilers reflected the literary and scholastic fashion of their day. The admission of the texts I have cited proves the existence of a body of Ossianic romance which must by the eleventh century have won some recognition from the bardic class; the small space accorded to it in comparison with that assigned to the other cycles of mythic and heroic saga, notably to the Ulster cycle of Conchobor and Cuchulinn, proves that it was far less fashionable than they. Turn now to MSS. compiled after the twelfth century and we note a great change. The proportion of Ossianic texts increases steadily from century to century until at last more than sixty per cent. of native Irish fiction is Ossianic or pseudo-Ossianic. We can, I think, explain this fact as due to historic causes of a perfectly definite nature, the consideration of which sheds a deal of light upon Irish literature at large. From the fourth down to the end of the tenth century the head kingship of Ireland had remained almost

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exclusively in the North Irish tribe of the Hy Neill, the descendants of Niall of the Nine Hostages. Pre-eminence was thus secured for the Northern traditions whether historical or mythical ; the great heroic cycle of Ireland was that which commemorates the deeds of the Ulster chieftain Conchobor, of the Ulster braves Cuchulinn and Conall Cearnach. These traditions, these sagas, reflecting as they do the recitations of countless generations of storytellers and minstrels who had been accustomed to find the chief market for their wares among the dominant northern chieftains, make up the bulk of the great vellum MSS. which give us a fairly faithful idea of Irish literature up to the eleventh century. But at the beginning of that century a Munster chieftain, Brian of the Dalg Cais, wrested the head kingship of Ireland from the Hy Neill. The leading poets of the eleventh century were attached to the court of Brian and his descendants ; a number of important historical and legal works emanated from Munster. Is it too bold an hypothesis that Brian's success gave to the Ossianic saga, which belongs essentially to the south of Ireland, a share in the pre-eminence which had previously been enjoyed by the northern heroic traditions ? The Fenian tales existed long before the time of Brian, but they were not fashionable, they did not attract the attention of the chief bards and storytellers. Munster's head kingship gave

them a status and importance which they had previously lacked.

This hypothesis explains much. As the Ossianic legends only came largely into the hands of the bardic and story-telling class centuries after the alleged date of their personages, they necessarily lack the firmer and more precise historic note which characterises the Ulster cycle, connected as that was from its very inception with a definite historical tradition. The action of the one cycle, the Northern, takes place on earth, many as may be its links with the land of gods and demons; the action of the other really takes place in fairyland, associated though be its incidents with hills and caves and woodlands familiar to both storyteller and audience. There was a centuries old historic convention restraining and directing the one; the other, lacking such a convention, was at the mercy of the individual storyteller.

Another peculiarity of the later Ossianic literature—the standing antagonism between the Fenian warriors and the *Lochlannach*—is perhaps largely due to the assumed emergence of the saga under Brian and his successors. For Brian, the victor of Clontarf struck down in the moment of crowning victory, was essentially a champion of the Gael against the Gall or foreigner. What more natural than that his deeds and those of his warrior son, Murachaidh, should colour the south

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Irish saga once it came into the hands of the court bards or reciters? Certain it is that both father and son figure frequently in the later Ossianic romances and in folk-tales connected therewith, thus testifying to the fact that their substance goes back to a time when the valiant deeds of Dalcassian princes were still fresh in the memory of the Irish race.

Be this as it may, and whether the explanation which I have essayed be accepted or not, it remains true that in the post twelfth century Irish literature the Ossianic cycle occupies an almost predominant position. The oldest text of the secondary or mediæval stage of the cycle is also the longest and in many ways the most important of all, the so-called *Agallamh na Senorach*, or Colloquy of the Elders. I know nothing in any literature that at all resembles it. Formally, it is a chaos of local legends connected only by the fact that all are put into the mouth of Caoilte, the last survivor of the Fenian band, and are related by him either to Patrick or to various chieftains with whom he takes up his quarters. It thus follows the model of the pre-mediæval topographical poem put in Finn's mouth, in which the mention of each place calls up its appropriate story. Like so many Irish texts the Colloquy is a mixture of prose and verse. The protagonist, as already stated, is Caoilte; Ossian is, indeed, mentioned as being, save Caoilte,

the sole survivor of the band, but he goes to stay with his fairy mother in the elfin mound of *Ucht Cleitigh*, whilst his comrade perambulates the length and breadth of Erin and expounds to his wondering and eager hearers the heroic lore of the past. Among these hearers none is more eager or more naively and intently interested than Patrick. From the time that he and his clerics meet the tall men with their huge wolf dogs, and wonder greatly as they gaze upon them, "for the largest man among them reached but the waist or else to the shoulder, and they sitting," of the Fenian warriors, the saint's curiosity is unwearied and persisting. True he has some scruples at first. "Were it not for us an impairing of the devout life, an occasion of neglecting prayer, and of deserting converse with God, we, as we talked with thee, would feel the time pass quickly, warrior." But his two guardian angels come to reassure him, and "with equal emphasis and concordantly" urge that the ancient warriors' tales be written "on tabular staffs of poets and in minstrels' language, so that it be a pastime for the nobles of the latter time to give ear to them." The devout saint pays due heed to this message from heaven, and the close of each incident recalled to Caoilte's memory by the sight of some hill or grave mound is marked by his approval: "Success and benediction, Caoilte, all this is a recreation of spirit and mind to us. And where is Brogan

the scribe? ' Nor does his satisfaction stop short here. In the course of their wandering, Fian and saint come to the grave of a warrior who had died of shame because he could not on the spot fittingly reward a poet who had panegyrised him. "Heaven and his release from torment be from me to him in recompense of his sense of honour," is Patrick's comment, and "in that very hour his soul came out of pain and sat on Patrick in the form of a white dove." Nay, he grants Heaven to a minstrel of the fairy clan who delights him with his music; "but for a twang of the fairy spell that infests it nothing could more nearly resemble Heaven's harmony," is his remark to his scribe, and the latter's answer deserves record, "if music there be in Heaven, why should there not on earth, wherefore it is not right to banish away minstrelsy." That Caoilte should receive Heaven as the reward of his storytelling need not surprise, but indeed he is as devout and curious of the saint's teaching as the saint is gracious and curious of his pagan lore; the relations between the two are full of an exquisite and courteous cordiality. One feels that for the storyteller to whom we owe the *Colloquy*, the glories of old time Erin were dear, but not dearer than the Heaven which by grace of Mary's son and Patrick's intercession he himself hoped one day to win.

There is no unity in the *Colloquy*, no connecting

link save the personality of the narrator. Close upon a hundred legends are given in full or in brief, the latter as a rule. The allusions are often so curt and remote as to be unintelligible to us nowadays. Here, we feel, is a vast mass of legend, all more or less familiar to the story-teller's hearers, summed up in terse form. In its extant form the *Colloquy*, of which the MSS. belong to the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century, is in the main, I think, a compilation of the late thirteenth century; if this is so, the story-tellers of the previous hundred and fifty years must indeed have been busy with the Ossianic heroes, for scarce a page of the *Colloquy* but presupposes romances which must at one time have existed in a more lengthened form.

The subject-matter of the Ossianic episodes which make up the *Colloquy* is various. We find instances of the theme of an oversea princess fleeing from an abhorred husband or suitor to seek protection with those patterns of chivalry and valour, Finn and his champions; we have raids, oversea, by Fenian warriors in search of brides or treasure. But by far a larger number of stories involve the relations between the Fenian and the fairy clan, the Tuatha de Danann. These are pictured as akin to mortals in form and stature, though gifted with more than mortal beauty and grace; liable to violent death, but immune from disease and old age; brave, but less brave and warlike than the human

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warriors whose aid they eagerly seek in the conflicts they wage among themselves ; endowed with such superhuman powers as invisibility and shape-shifting, and, in especial, preeminent in magic and wizardry. Thanks to these powers they frequently take the upper hand at first, but in the long run fortune remains with the Fenian warriors, and hard though be the straits in which they often find themselves they invariably emerge with enhanced fame and the repute of unconquerable prowess. The fairy maidens are often fain of the mortal heroes ; nor do the chieftains of Faery disdain to seek brides among mortal maidens. Matter is thus yielded for a number of love tales, mostly tragic in their issue, but related with a gentle pathos, lacking all ring of true passion, which is characteristic of the *Colloquy*. Akin to this is the general tone of soft melancholy which pervades the romance—it is full of lament for the days that are no more, but the lament is neither bitter nor piercing ; it recognises the inexorable and weeps over it, but neither rails nor curses.

Sensitiveness to natural impressions and delight in the chase are characteristic of the *Colloquy*, as, indeed, they are of Ossianic romance in every stage of its development. Whereas the fighting pieces strike the reader as perfunctory and conventional, all that relates to woodcraft and woodland life is treated with a deep-felt joyousness. Nature, especially in

her sterner moods, is keenly observed, as witness the following lay on winter—

“Cold the winter and the wind is risen; the high-couraged, unquelled stag is on foot. Bitter cold to-night is the whole mountain, yet for all that the ungovernable stag is belling. The deer of Slievecarn of the gatherings lays not his side to the ground; no less than he, the stag of frigid Echtge’s summit catches the chorus of the wolves. I, Caoilte, with brown Dermot and with keen light-footed Oscar, we, too, in the nipping night’s waning end would listen to the music of the pack.”

But the minstrel has as keen an eye for the softer aspects of nature—

“O well of the strand of the two women, lovely thy luminous branching cresses; from thy banks thy trouts are to be seen, thy wild swine in the wilderness hard by, thy fair hunting-cragland, thy deer, thy dappled and red-chested fawns . . . lovely the colour of thy purling stream, O thou that art azure-hued and green as the surrounding copsewood is mirrored in thee.”

(c) Post-mediæval Ossianic Romance.

Startling is the contrast as we turn from the *Colloquy* to the next great division of Ossianic romance, the Ballad section of the post-mediæval texts. It is as if we left a cathedral close, grace-

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fully monotonous in its uniform hues of grey and green, touched with the high-bred air of a spot remote from earthly passion and strife, and ventured forth into a wild and rocky moorland where man, living close to Nature at her sternest, becomes stern and fierce as the tempest he dares, or the wolf he pursues. The differences concern the form and subject-matter as well as the tone and spirit of the texts. Whereas the *Colloquy* is in prose interspersed with verse, the narratives we now have to consider are almost wholly in verse. Caoilte is no longer the witness *par excellence* to the departed glories of the Fenian prince, Ossian has almost completely ousted him. Many of the personages, scenes, and incidents recorded in the *Colloquy* are absent from the ballads, in which again we find much for which the *Colloquy* affords no clue. Of infinitely greater importance is the change of tone and spirit. Caoilte and Patrick are, we have seen, friends who love and respect each other, each conscious of his worth and delighting to honour the other; the warrior accepts devoutly the teaching of the saint, and the saint rejoices to fling wide open the gates of heaven. Ossian, in the ballads, is a pagan, defiant and reckless, full of contempt and scorn for the howling clerics and their churlish low-bred deity. The Patrick with whom he has to do well deserves this scorn. The benignant and gracious gentleman of the *Colloquy*, keenly appreciative of

the great-hearted generosity of the Fenian chiefs, is replaced by a sour and stupid fanatic, harping with wearisome monotony on the damnation of Finn and all his comrades ; a hard taskmaster to the poor old blind giant, to whom he grudges food, and upon whom he plays shabby tricks in order to terrify him into acceptance of Christianity. To milder arguments indeed Ossian is deaf ; when Patrick vaunts his God as maker of field and grass and all creation the warrior answers scornfully—

'Twas not in forming fields or grass
That my King took delight ;
But in mangling the bodies of heroes,
In contesting kingdoms and spreading his fame.

He cannot believe that aught could ever have resisted his father and comrades—

O Patrick, 'twas not in the time of the Fians
That that man God lived ;
Certain if he were east or west
The Fians would have stricken off his head.

Or again, in a verse which reaches the high-water mark of his indomitable and confident pagan ism—

Were my son Oscar and God
Hand to hand on the hill of the Fians,
If I saw my son down,
I'd say that God was a strong man.

Akin to this spirit of harsh and scornful defiance is

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the bitter resentment displayed by the pagan warrior as his memory recalls the days of his youth. He is old and feeble and blind, the delights of the chase and of love are denied him; these things are hard to bear, but the causes of his resentment lie deeper. He cannot away with the new world of which the Christian cleric is the symbol and the embodiment; he loathes the ascetic, churlish ideal unworthy a warrior and a gentleman, and he contrasts it with the delights that were once his, with the joy of a life wholly simple and unsophisticated, finding perfect satisfaction in battle, woodcraft and dalliance. He never wavers in his loyalty to the past; if his comrades are in hell, he is content to be there likewise. 'Would God,' he asks, 'admit his dog to Heaven's court?' And he cannot understand the Saint's indignant protest—were *he* but acquainted with God he would surely reconcile Him with the hound.

The earliest examples we have of these later Ossianic ballads are contained in a MS. compiled by James Macgregor, Dean of Lismore in Perthshire, some time before the year 1518. The Dean, a lover of song and tale, jotted down all that took his fancy, poems ascribed to the heroes of the cycle, poems formally assigned to bards of his own or a slightly earlier time, some complete, some fragmentary, some a mere jumble of heterogeneous scraps. The note I have characterised in the preceding

pages is firmly struck in several of the Ossianic poems in the Dean's collection. If we put aside this Scotch-Gaelic MS., which represents a tradition as old as the fifteenth century at the latest, we must come down to the seventeenth century before we find either in Scotland or Ireland MSS. containing this species of ballad. But throughout the eighteenth century and in Ireland, at least, down to the middle of this century, such MSS. abound, and numberless episodes of the cycle are worked up in the form of a dialogue between Ossian and Patrick in which the railing lament of the aged warrior is a standing feature.

The literary problem disclosed by these facts has scarce been noted, still less has any serious attempt at its solution been essayed. Is the pagan, anti-clerical note of Ossianic literature younger in fact, as it is undoubtedly younger in record, than the harmony of Christian hagiology and native saga revealed in the *Colloquy of the Elders*? Did a change come over the feeling of Gaeldom at some time during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, originating a new conception and presentment of the relation between Saint and Pagan hero? Did this change of feeling originate in Scotch Gaeldom and did it work back to Ireland? Is it possibly due to a larger admixture of Norse blood in Scotch Gaeldom? Or is the mood, only fully revealed in the latest MSS. and in living tradition, the primitive

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and genuine one, and is the harmonising process noticeable in the *Colloquy of the Elders* the work of an original artist who transformed current tradition to suit the needs of an imagination at once devout and patriotic? If this latter view be accepted may not the emergence of the older Pagan spirit in the later romances be due to the fact that, under the increasing competition of Classic, French and English literature from the fifteenth century onwards, the native literature fell more into the hands of the folk and thus reverted to the archaic stage from which it had started?

I am content to ask afresh these questions which no one has asked before me, and shall not essay any answer. I will merely say that whilst I concede the possibility of the anti-clerical Pagan spirit of Ossianic legend being a creation of the last four centuries, I deem it extremely improbable.

I have laid special emphasis on this one point both because it concerns the dominant feature of post-mediæval Ossianic romance, and because of its bearing upon the intellectual and moral history of the Gael alike in Ireland and in Scotland; but it must not be supposed that the note of protest and defiance, although the most characteristic, is the sole one of the later literature, and that this consists, formally, of nothing save wrangles between Patrick and Ossian. The older tradition

which made Caoilte the representative of the Fenian band has not entirely disappeared from the later texts, nor, where Ossian has taken Caoilte's place, is the former always pictured as in bitter enmity with St. Patrick. Moreover, besides the dramatic narrative poems, in which the dialogue framework is of as much moment as the episode which it enshrines, many narrative poems exist which lack the framework altogether, or in which it is mere conventional ornament; there also exists a great mass of prose narratives which dispense entirely with what may be styled the "survivor" machinery, and relate episodes of the cycle in a style and tone which differ greatly from those of the poems.

These later prose romances may be roughly divided into two main classes: the first wearing a more historic aspect, selecting its themes chiefly from the relations of Finn to professed contemporaries mentioned in the annals, elaborating an account of the organisation of the Fenian band, and, as a rule, serious in intent and effect, though frequently fantastic in presentment and bombastic in style; the second humorous, almost grotesque, in choice of incident and mode of narration, or else conceived in a vein of avowed and deliberate romanticism. In this second class coincidences of incident and situation with the later stage of Arthurian romance occur not infrequently,

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coincidences so marked as to render improbable their attribution to chance or to essential kinship between the two bodies of literature, and to warrant the conclusion that the Franco-English romance of chivalry found its way to Ireland in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and exercised some influence upon the later Ossianic tales, an influence, be it noted, secondary and accidental rather than primary and essential. Irish mythic romance reveals no trace of such deep and far-reaching modification as befell, for instance, the French *chansons de geste* after their contact with the *Matière de Bretagne*, the Arthur romances.

The humorous and grotesque stories of the second class present most affinity with the prose narratives preserved orally to this day in Ireland and Scotland; and the comparison between the MS. version, two or three centuries old, and the living folk-tale, is often of extreme interest. As a rule the folk versions are wilder, rugged, more fantastic than those found in MSS. of the last three centuries. It may happen, too, that the tale picked up but a few years ago has a mode of depicting the material conditions of the saga, and a method of characterisation which *look* (I do not say which *are*) more archaic than those of the MS. versions. Some scholars have urged that the tales found in MSS. of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries are inventions of the story-tellers of the

day, and that in percolating through to the folk they put off much of the finery with which the professional story-teller had adorned them, and put on a homely, barbaric garb. To my mind the reverse process is a more likely one: the folk were at all times full of stories about Finn and his braves, stories which, lacking either pseudo-history or highly developed literary form, were taken up by the professional narrators and ultimately transcribed in the fashion of the time. This I believe was the usual course, though the other may have been, and in some cases certainly was, taken. For story-teller and audience were separated by no such gulf as divides the modern man of letters from the vast mass of the reading public. The same body of tradition was common to both, and the differences in handling, though numerous, were unessential.

Down to the middle of last century the Ossianic cycle retained its sway over the native literary class; the tales were continually being re-worked over and remodelled, and a certain amount of fresh invention, on the lines and in accord with the spirit of the older legend, took place. Thus the well-known poem of Ossian in *Tir na n-Og* (the Land of Youth) is undoubtedly the composition of the eighteenth-century poet Michael Comyn. But it would, I believe, be an entire mistake to imagine that he invented the central incident, or even a large amount of the subsidiary detail; he took a

traditional theme and narrated it in the traditional spirit, in perfect because unconscious accord with all the conventions of the literature to which he was adding a monument. He probably knew the countryside versions, he was certainly familiar with what poets of the previous centuries had composed, and, himself the last of a long line of folk-singers, he produced a work which, his in its wording, is yet traditional and popular in substance and form.

The points in which Ossianic literature of the last four centuries, whether in prose or verse, whether collected from the lips of the folk or recorded in the MS. of the professional narrator, differs from the mediæval and pre-mediæval literature are trifling and insignificant compared with the essential similarities of matter and treatment. Development there has been, variation, also it may occasionally be decadence, but it still remains the same body of heroic-mythic romance, the outlines of which are clearly apparent in the twelfth-century vellums. Due stress has already been laid upon the permanence of the note of lament and protest. The theme of Fenian relation to oversea invaders, whether it assume the shape of defence against raids, of harrying expeditions to distant lands, of succour to distressed foreign damsels, or of abduction of outland brides, is constant and manifold in its variety; it forms the staple of the

lengthiest prose narrative of the cycle (saving the *Colloquy*), the *Battle of Ventry*, in which Finn's rôle as the representative defender of Gaeldom against the foreigner culminates. Equally prominent is the theme of the Magic Hunt, in the course of which the heroes fall into the power of the wizard and fairy clan, whence they invariably escape with increase of fame. The story of Grainne's love for Diarmaid maintained its sway and found expression both in prose and verse. Scattered episodes have come down to us in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century MSS., but, as a whole, we only know it in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century versions, the very popularity of which probably tended to the disappearance of the earlier forms. The atmosphere of somewhat unreal romance is preserved to the last. Were it not for the ever-insistent delight in the wild life of woodland and mountain, we should seem to move wholly in a company of mists and phantoms. The breath of open-air life, the joy in nature, sweeten and quicken what would otherwise be too frequently tedious and inane.

It would be vain, as may be gathered from the foregoing characterisation of this literature as a whole, to seek from it a realistic representation of the life of a given period, least of all of the period in which its heroes are alleged to have lived. Its oldest texts cannot be used as evidence to pre-

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Christian modes of life in Ireland as can the Ulster hero legends. Where precision of statement exists—as, for instance, in the elaborate account of the way in which the Fenian bands were organised and recruited, and of the rights and privileges they enjoyed—it is, I believe, wholly unreliable, the figment of a later age. It has been urged with much ingenuity that this account preserves the memory of primitive contact between Ireland and Romanised Britain, and that the military system it discloses was modelled at second or third hand upon the Roman legion. I can only avow my scepticism. The essential characteristics of Fenian organisation as pictured in the romances, are independence alike of the High King and of the Provincial Kings, and wardenship of the coasts against oversea attacks. Had any knowledge of the Roman military system penetrated to third-century Ireland it might have been used by some ambitious chief for the purpose of subjugating his neighbours; it could not have originated the idea of a national system of defence, which presupposes lasting and repeated attacks affecting the whole nation. Nothing of the kind is known in third-century Ireland. In the ninth century the state of affairs was different: hardly a district of Ireland but was affected by the Norse incursions. It is conceivable that under these circumstances some form of organised militia should spring up, independent of the tribal system, and

placing its services at the disposal of any tribal chief who was especially menaced and whose ordinary resources were insufficient to meet the menace. But the account of the Fian band can hardly be taken seriously even if we suppose it to apply to facts and events of the ninth instead of the third century. It is too obviously a fancy picture, traced by some bard whose vision of the distant past was undisturbed by much real knowledge. It is none the less of extreme interest as embodying an ideal of patriotic chivalry which may be as old as the twelfth century, but probably took shape in the following century. The individual Fian must be at once an expert athlete and warrior and a poet versed in the twelve books of poetry; he must practise generosity largely, denying meat and valuables to none; he must hold his ground against any number of opponents less than nine. Collectively, the body stood outside the strict tribal rules which governed the rest of Irishmen: "if their guarantee was violated they must not accept material compensation in satisfaction." As a rule, if any Irishman was injured his tribe was bound to exact material compensation, the extent and nature of which were rigidly determined. As satisfaction was generally denied, private grievances became tribal feuds, and tribal enmities which prevented any effectual combination against the foreign invader were perpetuated. Some loosening of tribal

ties may well have taken place in the ninth-century warrior bands, the prototype of the Fenian militia described in the mediæval texts, and in so far there may be an historical basis for the mediæval account.

In other respects there is scarce a trace in the Ossianic stories of the sharply bitten, highly elaborate description of the material life and circumstances of the chieftain-warrior class which makes the texts of the Ulster cycle of such inestimable value to the student of the past. The descriptions of Finn's household and retainers which, it is true, have been preserved, lack the realistic precision of the earlier cycle. But the very feeling that continually besets the reader of this literature, the feeling that the story-teller is projecting himself back into a golden age which he knows to be unreal, enhances its value as an expression of the ideals which haunted the mind of the bardic story-tellers and their audience of chiefs and warriors. Courage, magnanimity, boundless generosity—these, the last especially, are the proper attributes of the heroes—

Were but the brown leaf which the wood sheds from it
gold,

Were but the white billow silver,

Finn would have given it all away !

is Caoilte's proud vaunt of his dead lord. Indeed, so perpetual is the insistence upon the virtue of open-handedness as to warrant the surmise that the story-teller class no longer possessed

the assured standing of earlier times, and was compelled to stimulate the liberality of its patrons. As the hero is a free giver, so also he must have a free mind, hating what is false and crooked and mean :

We the Fians never told a lie,
Falsehood was never known to them ;
'Twas by truth and the might of our arms
We 'scaped unhurt from each conflict.

And again :

Patrick, 'twas not the wont of the Fians
Not to give choice of the fight to their foes ;
Treachery they cherished not, nor malice,
Not such was the repute of their tribe.

Perhaps the finest picture of the warrior chief as conceived by the idealising fancy of mediæval Gaeldom is to be found in the two panegyrics upon Finn and Goll preserved by the Dean of Lismore :

Both poet and chief,
Braver than kings,
Firm chief of the Fian.

.

Foremost always,
Generous, just,
Despising a lie.
Of vigorous deeds,
First in song.
A righteous judge,
Firm in rule.

.. . . .

Marble his skin,
 The rose his cheek,
 Blue was his eye,
 His hair like gold.
 All men's trust,
 Of noble mind.
 Of ready deeds,
 To women mild.

.
 Noblest of kings,
 Finn ne'er refused
 To any man,
 Howe'er unknown.
 Ne'er from his house
 Sent those who came.

Or again :

A hero brave,
 Bold in assault.
 His bounty free,
 Fierce to destroy.
 Beloved of all,
 Goll, gentle, brave.

.
 Skilful and just
 He rules his men,
 His bounty wide,
 A bloody man.
 First in the schools,
 Of gentle blood
 And noble race,
 Liberal, kind,
 Untired in fight,
 No prince so wise.

Leopard in fight,
Fierce as a hound,
Of women loved.

What, it may be asked, is the literary merit of this body of romance? I have quoted enough, I trust, to show, even in an English dress, the frequent charm and beauty of detail. That it does not as a whole reach a very high level is due to the fact that it is essentially a mass of fairy tales, lacking that firm grip upon the elemental realities and passions possessed by all really great literature. The fairy tale, when it comes straight from the heart of a gifted and unsophisticated race, may often possess a direct and naïve beauty that is irresistible; or again, if it fall into the hands of an artist endowed with the temperament to feel and the skill to render its charm, it may assume a shape of alluring loveliness. Instances of both kinds of beauty occur in Ossianic romance, but, as a whole, when it came into the hand of the literary, the story-telling class in Ireland, that class no longer attracted, if I mistake not, the most gifted minds of the race. Thus no single passage or episode in the Fenian cyclè is as representative of native Gaelic artistry at its highest as much that may be cited from the Ulster sagas. Moreover, whilst the story-telling class which elaborated the Ossianic romances possessed conventions of narrative and expression which it diversified with extreme

ingenuity, it did not renew them, deprived as it was of really fertilising contact with other literatures. The result was that the inherent weaknesses of all fairy-tale romance were developed rather than removed, and the greater part of the Ossianic cycle is a literature of decadence in so far as it is rooted in the past and not in the present, and is compelled to derive its sustenance from convention and not from contact with life. Certain characteristics of the language in which the romances are composed further tend to accentuate defects from which romance at its best is never free. Gaelic is a language of extraordinary richness of vocabulary and variety of expression. Handled by generation after generation of literary artists, who sought novelty in ever-fresh elaboration of style rather than in invention of incident or revivification of spirit, it tends to fall at last to the level of the merely ingenious and pretty. All English translators of Ossianic poetry have dwelt upon the difficulty of a faithful rendering which shall avoid monotony and tedium. The same things are apparently being said over and over again. In English, yes; not so in Gaelic, where the wealth of synonym enables the poet to repeat himself with a slight variation. It thus comes to be the artist's aim to find many and varied expressions of an idea rather than to seek the only right one. In realistic literature, contact with life will

often produce adequate expression, even if artistic skill be lacking, but in romance the finest feeling is required for what alone is truly adequate in selection and rendering of incident. The dialogues between Patrick and Ossian contain matter promising in the extreme, but there was lacking an artist capable of conceiving all that the contrast of ascetic Christianity and Pagan joy of life implied, and of seeking until he found the one form of words adequate to the conception.

A word or two must be said upon a point that was fiercely debated between Ireland and Scotland after the publication of Macpherson's poems—the relative share of either section of Gaeldom in the Ossianic legend. The debate was futile because those who carried it on lacked the historical sense. They lost sight of the fact that up to the fifteenth century certainly, and, to a large extent, even during the seventeenth and part of the eighteenth century, Gaeldom, from a literary point of view, was practically one. The Gael of Ireland and Scotland shared equally in a common body of romance. This fact was forgotten by the Irishman and Scotchman of a hundred years ago, who, overlooking the romantic character of the cycle and dwelling solely upon its connection with historic fact, claimed it as a record, however distorted, of the past history of their land. The Irishman had

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far more reason on his side, because the historic basis such as it is of the cycle is connected with Gaelic Ireland and not with Gaelic Scotland; he was wrong in not recognising that much of the incident contained in the cycle has just as much claim to be localised in Gaelic Scotland as in Gaelic Ireland, or indeed wherever the Gael might have settled when he was still in the mythopœic stage, because it is no reflection, however distorted, of actual fact, but a translation into the terms of heroic romance of older mythic material common to all Gaels. He was also wrong in not recognising that the Scotch Gael was justified in developing this common body of romance in his own way, and that the specific Scotch Gaelic developments have exercised a marked, and in some cases, I would urge, a beneficial, effect upon the cycle as a whole. The Scotch disputants, on the other hand, put themselves out of court by their denial that Ireland was the land in which took place the historic events of the cycle, and in which it first assumed a literary shape which reacted upon and profoundly modified the popular versions. I have called the dispute futile, but it was not wholly so: in the ardour of debate texts were printed and criticised, and much valuable material was thus brought to light which might otherwise have remained hidden. But at this time of day the old controversy should be allowed to die and Irish and Scotch Gaels should

unite in cherishing the Ossianic romance as a common possession to be cared for and studied with brotherly emulation.

Dr. Hyde has already called attention to the fact that the metrical revolution which transformed Gaelic poetry in the seventeenth and eighteenth century—ultimately sweeping away the intricate system of metrics which had been in force since the tenth century at least—seems to have originated in Scotch Gaeldom. I have hinted at the possibility that the tone and spirit of the later Ossianic ballads may be a specific Scotch Gaelic creation. I would dwell for one moment upon one characteristic feature of Ossianic romance, its fondness for certain aspects of nature, as that also seems to me connected with Scotland. When the late Mr. Black celebrated with unwearied iteration the beauty of the Western Isles of Scotland, he was, all unknown to himself, taking up a tradition that had been potent among the Gaelic minstrels for over a thousand years. The gem of mediæval Gaelic nature poetry, indeed of all nature poetry written in any European vernacular for over a thousand years, is Deirdre's farewell to Alba in the *Woe of the Sons of Usnech*. The following from the *Colloquy* has not the poignant charm of that exquisite lament, but it gives a vivid impression of the joyous woodland outdoor life in which the Fenian heroes delighted—

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Arran of the many stags, the sea impinges upon her shoulders !

An isle in which whole companies were fed, and with crags among which blue spears are reddened.

Skittish deer are on her pinnacles, soft blackberries on her waving heather ; cool water there is in her rivers and mast upon her russet oaks.

Greyhounds there were in her and beagles ; blackberries and sloes of the dark blackthorn ; dwellings with their backs set close against her woods, while the deer fed scattered by her oaken thickets !

A crimson crop grew on her rocks, in all her glades a faultless grass. Over her crags, affording friendly refuge, leaping went on, and fawns were skipping !

Smooth were her level spots, fat her wild swine, cheerful her fields . . . her mast hung on the boughs of her forest hazels, and there was sailing of long galleys past her.

Right pleasant their condition all when fair weather sets in ! Under her river banks trouts lie ; the sea-gulls whirling round the grand cliff answer one the other. At every fitting time delectable is Arran !

It may well be that minute and loving descriptions such as these are due to men sprung from the isles and glens they picture so fondly.

It is hard in so few pages to give an adequate amount of a literature which has lived for so many centuries, and which still lives in the heart and memory of many thousand Gaelic-speaking peasants. The note of permanence, of continuity, is indeed the crowning wonder of Ossianic romance, and may well be emphasised afresh by way of conclusion to this

brief study. If an English minstrel from the court of Canute or the Confessor revisited the world he would—granting the initial difficulty of language were overcome—find scarce a hundred living men who could follow his recitation with any measure of understanding. To the most learned of scholars much would be entirely obscure, much only partially followed; to the vast mass of educated Englishmen his songs and stories would be meaningless, crowded with personages, incidents, and themes wholly unfamiliar. A French minstrel of the same period would stand a better chance; from the Universities of France, Germany, and Italy might be drawn an audience fairly familiar with the subject-matter of his lays, whilst the man of average education would at least have a bowing acquaintance with Charlemagne and his Peers. But if a contemporary of Brian Boru were to appear in many districts of Ireland or the Highlands, and tell his tales of Finn and the Fians, subject-matter, mode of narration, methods of description and characterisation—all would appeal familiarly to his audience of peasants ignorant for the most part of reading or writing. Story-tellers and hearers alike would praise the generosity and wisdom of Finn, celebrate the fleetness of Caoilte, the irresistible beauty of Diarmaid, the rude prowess of Goll; alike they would mourn the untimely fate of Oscar, bravest of the brave. The tales of Finn's birth and upbringing, of

Ossian's fairy parentage, of Grainne's tragic love, would find hearers as appreciative, as familiar with every detail as when the minstrel recited them at the court of the Dalacassian princes. Here and there narrator and hearers would find differences; each would note the appearance of unfamiliar heroes and adventures; the narrator might be found old-fashioned, or he, again, might condemn the modern versions as diffuse and tasteless. But these points of difference would be unimportant, and scarce affect the startling conclusion that well-nigh the same stories as were told of Finn and his warrior braves by the Gael of the eleventh century, are told in well-nigh the same way by his descendant of to-day.

CHRONOLOGICAL APPENDIX

SECOND AND THIRD CENTURY, A.D.—Period of the Fenian warriors.

According to the Irish Annals Cumhal, Finn's father was uncle to Conn the Hundred fighter, high king of Ireland, whose death is recorded by the Four Masters in 157 A.D. Art, father of Finn's father-in-law, Cormac, was slain in the Battle of Magh Mucruimhe, recorded by the Four Masters in 195 A.D. ; the first year of Cormac's reign is placed by them in 227 A.D., his death in 266 A.D. They record Finn's death in 283 A.D., following the eleventh century annalist, Tighernach. But Tighernach's contemporary, Gilla Caemhain, makes Finn die fifty-seven years after Magh Mucruimhe, which, if his date for that battle be the same as Tighernach's, a fact that cannot now be ascertained, would place it in 252 A.D. Tighernach, followed by Four Masters, ascribes the Battle of Gabhra to the year 284 A.D. He mentions Cairbre's death, but makes his slayer Seniach, son of Fer Cirb of the Fothairt. Cormac, Cairbre and Finn are the only personages of the saga mentioned by Tighernach, who represents the strict historical point of view ; his silence concerning other personages and incidents of the cycle warrants the conclusion that he looked upon them as belonging to romance rather than to history, but does not justify doubt concerning the existence of the romances in his day ; he was equally reticent as regards the Ulster cycle, with the monuments of which he must of course have been perfectly familiar.

FIFTH CENTURY.—Apostolate of Patrick, whose death is recorded by the Four Masters in 493 A.D.

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EIGHTH CENTURY.—The tales about Mongan-Finn, preserved in the Book of the Dun Cow, possibly belong to the latter part of the century. They seem to antedate any trace of Norse influence and to be very little later than the Voyage of Bran, which is almost certainly a composition of the early eighth century at the latest.

NINTH CENTURY.—The Norse invasions, which began at the close of the eighth century, and continued throughout the ninth century, profoundly affected the Ossianic cycle as a whole. Indeed, Professor H. Zimmer has gone so far as to deny altogether the alleged third century historic basis of the cycle and to assert that the historical Finn was the ninth century chief of a mercenary band—half Norse, half Irish. I have given a full summary of his argument in the Introduction to Campbell's *Fians*. It will suffice here to say that, whilst Professor Zimmer's insistence upon the important Norse element in the Ossianic tales is fully recognised, his theory as to the personages of the cycle has entirely failed of acceptance.

EARLY TENTH CENTURY.—Cormac, the King Bishop of Cashel, was slain in 908. A glossary of words and expressions, obsolete in his day, has come down to us containing many very important quotations from works now lost. Whilst it is doubtful if the glossary is actually to be attributed to him, it is almost certain that it is only a little younger in date. The oldest portion of the glossary contains references to and stories about Finn.

The *Amra Choluimb Chille*, the Elegy upon Columba traditionally ascribed to Dallan Forgaill, the sixth and seventh century bard, is, according to Professor J. Strachan (*Revue Celtique*, xvii., 41 *et seq.*), a composition of the early ninth century. The glosses upon this poem preserved in the Book of the Dun Cow are probably a century younger. These glosses have preserved the verse of a poem celebrating Grainne's love for Diarmaid. See *supra*, p. 14, and *infra*, p. 55. The *Amra* has just been

edited and translated by Dr. Whitley Stokes in the *Revue Celtique*, vol. xx. (1899). For the first time this remarkable monument of early Irish scholastic literature has been made really accessible to the student, not the least among the many invaluable services which Dr. Stokes has rendered to Irish studies.

LATE TENTH AND EARLY ELEVENTH CENTURIES.—Rise to power of the Munster chieftain Brian of the Dalg Cais, slain in 1014 at Clontarf. Throughout the eleventh century the Dalcassian princes and their bards and learned men are prominent. All the stories about Finn found in the Book of the Dun Cow *must* have been compiled before 1050, and probably represent a mass of written tradition already one hundred to one hundred and fifty years old.

LATE ELEVENTH CENTURY.—The Book of the Dun Cow was copied from earlier MSS., before 1106, when its scribe was slain. Professor H. Zimmer has argued with great plausibility that it is a transcript of MSS. collected and revised by Flann of Monasterboice, who died in 1054 with the reputation of being the most learned man of his day.

EARLY TWELFTH CENTURY.—The last Norse invasion of Ireland took place under Magnus Barelegs (so nicknamed by his Norse subjects from his fondness for the Irish dress), slain in 1103. This invasion has left its trace in the Ossianic post-mediæval ballad of Manus, and is, apparently, the last historic event which has affected the cycle.

MID-TWELFTH CENTURY.—The Book of Leinster was compiled in the years preceding 1160. It is largely made up of transcripts from much earlier MSS., but it also contains poems by almost contemporary writers.

THIRTEENTH CENTURY.—Probable date of redaction of the *Colloquy of the Elders* preserved in MSS. of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It should be noted,

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however, that whilst the *Colloquy* is full of traces of Norse influence, it is, apparently, altogether free from any traces of the Norman invasion.

LATE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.—Latest possible date for the Ballad literature in semi-dramatic form vouched for by the Book of the Dean of Lismore, compiled in the years preceding 1518.

EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.—The Dhuanair Finn, the oldest existing Irish-Gaelic MS. of Ossianic post-medixval ballads, was copied in 1627 from earlier MSS., the transcript being made for a Captain Sorley MacDonell of the great Antrim family. The publication of this MS. which will, it is hoped, be undertaken before long, by Mr. John Mac Neill for the Irish Texts Society, will throw a flood of light upon the later development of the cycle. As far as I can judge from a list of contents which Mr. MacNeill has kindly sent me, the contents of this MS. are essentially of the same nature as the Ossianic portions of the Book of the Dean of Lismore.

MID-EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.—Composition of the poem Oisín in Tir na n-Og, by Michael Comyn, probably the last deliberate bit of creation or rearrangement of the legendary substance of the cycle.

About the same time James Macpherson was composing his Ossian in Scotland. But whereas Comyn remains perfectly faithful to the traditional subject matter and mode of presentment, Macpherson disregards the latter entirely and the former very largely.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

I first cite the chief works in which Ossianic literature may be found printed, and to which constant reference will be made in the following pages. I then go through the study, page by page, and append notes upon any points likely to be of use to the student.

Miss Brooke.—Reliques of Irish Poetry, &c., Dublin, 1789.

Contents: Conloch and Cucullan. Magnus the Great. The Chase. Moira Borb. War Ode to Osgur. Ode to Gaul, &c. (the remaining contents are non Ossianic). The texts edited and translated by Miss Brooke belong to the post-mediæval section of Ossianic literature.

Oss. Soc.—Transactions of the Ossianic Society for the years 1853–58, 6 vols., Dublin, 1854–1861.

Contents: Vol. I.—The Battle of Gabhra. Vol. II.—The Festivities at the House of Conan of Ceann-Sleibhe. Vol. III.—The Pursuit after Diarmaid O'Duibhne and Grainne, edited by Standish Hayes O'Grady. How Cormac mac Airt got his Branch. The Lamentation of Oisín after the Fenians. Vol. IV.—Fenian Poems edited by John O'Daly: the Dialogue between Oisín and Patrick: Battle of Cnoc an Air. The Lay of Meargach. The wife of Meargach. The Chase of Loch Lein. The Lay of Oisín on the Land of Youth (Comyn's poem edited by Bryan O'Looney). The Boyish Exploits of Finn (fifteenth-century text edited by J. O'Donovan). Vol. V.—The Proceedings of the Great Bardic Institution, edited by O. Connellan (not an Ossianic text). Vol. VI.—Fenian Poems edited by John O'Daly: the Chase of Sliabh Guilleann. The Chase of Sliabh Fuaid. The Chase of

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Gleann an Smoil. The Praise of Beinn Eadair. The Hunt of Sliabh Truim. The Chase of Sliabh na-m-Ban. The Chase of the Enchanted Pigs of Aenghus an Brogha. The Hunt on the Borders of Lough Derg. The Adventures of the Amadan Mor.

Simpson.—Poems of Óisín, Bard of Erin, &c., by J. H. Simpson, London, 1857.

Contents: Deardra. Conloch. Dialogue between Óisín and St. Patrick (with summaries of the same Poems as in Oss. Soc. IV.). Óisín comes from the Youthful City. Conversion of Óisín. Fionn goes to Graffee. Fionn goes to Loughlin. Enchantment of the Giants in Ceash. Óisín born of a doe. Death of Erraran son of Fionn. A Grecian Princess comes to Erin. The Battle of Ventry Harbour.

A valuable collection made in Munster and South Connaught.

Lismore.—The Dean of Lismore's Book, &c., edited by the Rev. Th. McLauchlan. Edinburgh, 1861.

Contains twenty-eight Ossianic pieces.

Leabhar na Feinne.—Heroic Gaelic Ballads collected in Scotland chiefly from 1512 to 1871, arranged by J. F. Campbell. London, 1871.

Prints the Ossianic portions of the Book of the Dean of Lismore, the Dunstaffnage MS. (1603), the Ardochonail M.S. (1670), and the collections of Pope, MacNicol, Jerome Stone, Fletcher, MacDiarmid, Kennedy, Gillies, Irvine, Turner, MacCallum, and smaller collections of the eighteenth century as well as Campbell's own collections. The Gaelic text alone is given, but Kennedy's English summaries are printed.

Silva Gadelica.—A collection of Tales in Irish, edited and translated by Standish Hayes O'Grady. London, 1892.

Contains the following Ossianic pieces: X.—The Panegyric of Cormac and the Death of Finn, son of Cumhall,

XI. — Enumeration of Finn's Household. XII. — The Colloquy of the Ancients (my quotations in the foregoing pages are made from this fine version). XVII. — Pursuit and Flight of the Gilla Decair. XIX. — The Carle in the Drab Coat. XXI. — The Enchanted Cave of Ceshcorran. XXVI. — The little Brawl at Almhain.

Mr. O'Grady's translation of the Colloquy is made from the Book of Lismore (an Irish fifteenth-century MS. not to be confounded with the Scotch Book of the Dean of Lismore), which is imperfect in many places. Dr. Whitley-Stokes has printed the missing portions from the Oxford MS. in *Irische Texte*, vol. iv. part i.

Campbell. Fians. — Stories, Poems and Traditions of Fionn and his Warrior Band, collected from oral sources by J. G. Campbell. London, 1891.

Forms Vol. IV. of *Waifs and Strays of Celtic Tradition*. Mr. Campbell, Minister of Tiree, must not be confounded with J. F. Campbell, of Islay, the collector of the *West Highland Popular Tales*.

Mr. Campbell's *Fians*, collected in Tiree within the last thirty years, affords wonderful proof of the vitality of the Ossianic cycle among the Gaelic speaking peasantry. In the bibliographical notes to the volume, I have given the concordance of the versions with the older Irish sources as far as known, and with the versions contained in the *Leabhar na Feinne*. These notes thus form a rough index to the larger part of the cycle.

Revue Celtique. — Vols. I-XX. Paris, 1870--1899.

The following Ossianic pieces are contained in this admirable periodical, which first under the editorship of Mons. Henri Gaidoz, then under that of Mons. D'Arbois de Jubainville, has rendered more services to the study of Celtic antiquity than any other publication of its kind.

I. — Fionn's Enchantment (J. F. Campbell). II. — The Battle of Cnucha (from the Book of the Dun Cow, W. M. Hennessy). V. — Macgnimartha Find (Kuno Meyer).

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VII.—Finn and the Phantoms (from the Book of Leinster, Whitley Stokes). XI.—Uath Beinne Etair (from Harl. 5280, K. Meyer). XIII.—L. C. Stern, *Le MS. irlandais de Leide* (a fifteenth-century MS. which contains some interesting Ossianic texts, which are given in the original and in a French translation). Oscar au fléau (Douglas Hyde). The Battle of Mag Mucrime (Whitley Stokes). XIV.—Two tales about Finn (from the thirteenth-century MS. Stowe 992, Kuno Meyer).

Ventry.—Cath Finntrága, or the Battle of Ventry, edited from MS. Rawl. B. 487, by Kuno Meyer. Oxford, 1885.

Edited from the same fifteenth-century MS. which contains the oldest text of the *Colloquy*, after which this is the longest of all the Fenian Romances. The editor's Introductions are of great interest and value.

NOTES

PAGE 1. *Macpherson*.

The latest general work on Macpherson is Mr. J. B. Saunders' *Life and Letters of James Macpherson*, 1895. Mr. Saunders has no real appreciation of the points at issue in the Ossianic controversy and is much too favourable to Macpherson. The best brief summary of the debate with which I am acquainted is contained in Mr. A. Macbain's articles, *Macpherson's Ossian*, *Celtic Magazine*, Feb.—April, 1887. The *Report of the Highland Committee*, 3 vols., 1805, is still worth consulting.

PAGE 5. *The Battle of Gabhra*.

The oldest text relating to this battle, a poem of seven quatrains, placed in Ossian's mouth preserved in the Book of Leinster, has been edited and translated by E. O'Curry, *Oss. Soc.*, i. pp. 49–57.

PAGES 7-9. *The Pre-Medieval Ossianic Romance.*

I have collected all the references accessible at the time, (1890) in my Essay on the development of the Fenian or Ossianic saga: *Waifs and Strays*, vol. ii. Cf. pp. 402-408.

The tales about Mongan-Finn are edited and translated by Prof. Kuno Meyer, *Voyage of Bran*, vol. i. pp. 42 *et seq.*

The poem *Finn and the Phantoms* is translated and edited by Dr. Whitley Stokes, *Revue Celtique*, vol. vii. pp. 289 *et seq.* A later text is contained in the early seventeenth century Franciscan Dhuanairé Finn. A Highland folk-tale which presents the most marked analogies to the early poem has been edited and translated by Campbell of Islay, *Revue Celtique*, vol. i. pp. 193 *et seq.*

PAGE 9. *Finn's Poem on Winter.*

I have translated Professor Zimmer's German version (*Kelt. Beiträge*, III.) correcting by Dr. Whitley Stokes' version in his edition of the *Amra Ch. Chille*.

PAGE 10. *The Cairn Incident.*

This is found in one of the most archaic of Irish heroic legends: The Destruction of Daderga's fort, which relates how Conaire Mor, high-king of Ireland, was surprised and slain by piratical raiders. Before starting to attack the fort they pile up a cairn.

PAGE 13. *Diarmuid and Grainne.*

The great story list in the Book of Leinster (printed in O'Curry's MS. Materials, pp. 583-593) has preserved the title of a story, *Alithed Grainne re Diarmuid*, the main outlines of which were almost certainly the same as in the extant version. The Book of Leinster story list is

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undoubtedly as old as the early eleventh, and may be as old as the early eighth, century. The tale in its present form, is edited and translated by Mr. Standish Hayes O'Grady (*Oss. Soc.*, vol. iii.) from eighteenth-century MSS. What is apparently a fragment of an earlier recension has been edited and translated by Professor Kuno Meyer (Uath Beinne Etair) from a fifteenth-century MS. Harl. 5280, *Revue Celt.*, vol. xi.

In addition to the verse quoted on p. 14 the commentary to the *Amra Ch. Chille* contains another fragment, two lines of a speech addressed by Diarmaid to Grainne, vaunting the woodland fare he can offer her. See Dr. Stokes' translation, *Revue Celt.*, vol. xx.

In the Arthurian romance the story of Guinevere's love for Lancelot, which is at least as old as the year 1160, has probably replaced a much older and ruder version. Guinevere's infidelity is alluded to by Geoffrey of Monmouth.

An interesting feature of the Diarmaid-Grainne story is its association with the rude stone monuments. All over Ireland cromlechs are found known as Diarmaid and Grainne's beds. This has been held to denote an archaic strain in the story.

PAGE 16. *The Dalcassian Princes and their Court.*

Among the works which almost certainly were composed in Munster may be mentioned the history of the struggles between the Irish and Norsemen: *The Wars of the Gaedhil with the Gaill*, edited and translated by Todd, 1862. It is also probable that the extant recension of the Book of Rights is of Munster origin. The chief poet of the Dalcassian court was Mac Liag, who died in 1015.

Brian and Murachaidh (Murrogh) appear as folk-tale heroes very early. In ch. xviii. of the *Wars of the Gaedhil* a dialogue is recorded between Dunlang O'Hartugan

and Murachaidh in which the latter speaks of the allurements held out to him in "elf-mounds and fairy mansions." Although this chapter is, as Todd says (p. clxxviii. 5), an evident interpolation in the eleventh-century work, it must nevertheless be at least as old as the fourteenth century, as it is found in Todd's MS. D. which he assigns to that century. The scene of the famous folk-tale, the Leeching of Cian's Leg, is placed at Brian's Court. The earliest known recension is edited and translated, *Silva Gadelica* (No. xx.), from a fifteenth century MS. The oral versions (Cf. *Waifs and Strays*, vol. ii., pp. 208 *et seq.*) are much fuller, and, I believe, represent an earlier stage of the tale than the fifteenth-century MS.

PAGE 17. *The Norsemen in the Ossianic Stories.*

Professor Rhys contends (*Hibbert Lectures*, p. 355) that the Norsemen (Lochlannach) have taken the place of earlier mythical adversaries of Finn, and that "Lochlann, like the Welsh Llychlyn, before it came to mean the home of the Norsemen, denoted a mysterious country in the lochs and seas."

PAGE 20. *Grave-Opening.*

A common *motif* in the *Colloquy* is the opening of a Fenian warrior's grave and the rifling of its treasures. Eight such instances occur in the Book of Lismore version. I cannot help connecting this feature with the well-known grave-rifling practices of the Norse invaders.

PAGE 21. *The Tuatha de Danann.*

For a full discussion of the nature and attributes of this mysterious race I would refer to my *Voyage of Bran*, in particular to chapters xvii. and xviii.

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PAGE 22. *The Woodland Note in the Ossianic Romances.*

This note is absent from the tales of the Ulster heroic cycles, excepting the *Woe of the Sons of Usnech*, which in this, as in other respects, shows affinity with the Fenian cycle. It should also be noted that it is prominent in the Arthurian cycle, especially in romances connected with Tristan and Gawain. Until the Ossianic romances have been studied much more carefully it would be premature to found any argument of date upon this characteristic. It *may* denote that the stories belong to a very archaic stage as it *may* also be simply a trait which the Ossianic shares in common with other branches of mediæval literature.

PAGE 24. *The Lament for Past Days.*

As I have pointed out in my Introduction to Campbell's *Fians*, this note, characteristic of one of the great cycles of Gaelic romance, can be paralleled in Brythonic (Welsh) romance. There exist in Welsh a number of poems, attributed to the sixth-century Llywarch Hen, which picture him as the last survivor of the heroic struggle against the invading Saxons, lamenting his youthful prowess and joy of life. Whilst these poems cannot be, as once was thought, the composition of the sixth century chieftain, they are at least as old as the twelfth century. The tone of Llywarch Hen, like that of the Ballad Ossian, is bitter and resentful.

PAGES 24-25. *The Ballad Ossian.*

Quite adequate acquaintance with this section of post-mediæval Ossianic literature can be obtained from (*a.* as regards Scotland) the *Book of the Dean of Lismore*, Ian Campbell's *Popular Tales*, and *Leabhar na Feinne*, and J. G. Campbell's *Fians*; (*b.* as regards Ireland) from the

Ossianic Society publications, and from Simpson. I may refer again to my bibliographical notes to Campbell's *Fians* as supplying a summary index to the chief themes and episodes.

I should note that I use the term *ballad* in default of a short term of a more precise nature. The Ossianic narrative poems are not *ballads* in the sense we apply to the word, and the genuine ballad is almost unknown in Gaelic literature.

PAGE 29. *Pseudo-Historic Stories in the Later Ossianic Literature.*

The numerous late versions of the tale found in the Book of the Dun Cow, The Cause of the Battle of Cnucha, and the tract known as Finn's Boyish Exploits, may be cited as representative specimens.

PAGE 29. *Romantic and Humorous Prose Stories in the Later Ossianic Literature.*

Examples may be found in *Silva Gadelica* (No. xvii. The Flight and Pursuit of the Gilla Decair ; No. xix. The Carle of the Drab Coat ; No. xxi. The Enchanted Cave of Keshcorran), and Joyce, *Old Celtic Romances* (The Fairy Palace of the Quicken Trees ; The Pursuit of the Gilla Dacker). The romantic type is represented by the Battle of Ventry.

PAGE 30. *Ossianic Folk-Tales.*

Numerous examples may be found (*a.* for Scotland) in Campbell of Islay's *Popular Tales*, in MacInnes' *Folk and Hero Tales* (Waifs and Strays, vol. ii.), in MacDougall's *Folk- and Hero-Tales* (Waifs and Strays, vol. iii.), and in Campbell's *Fians* ; (*b.* for Ireland) in Larminie's *West Irish Folk-Tales*, 1894, 6s. ; in Curtin's *Hero-Tales of*

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Ireland (1895, 8s. 6d.), and *Myths and Folk-Lore of Ireland* (1890, 9s.).

The question of the relations between the Irish MS. and the oral folk-versions has been discussed by myself in the introductions and notes to the various volumes of *Waifs and Strays of Celtic Tradition*, more especially in the Introduction to vol. ii. MacDougall's *Folk- and Hero-Tales*, and by Dr. Hyde and myself in the Introduction to the former's *Beside the Fire*.

PAGE 35. *The Qualifications of a Fenian Warrior.*

The earliest extant text is that edited and translated *Silva Gadelica* (No. x.) from a fifteenth century MS. As Dr. Hyde notes it is couched in a vein of true Celtic hyperbole (*Lit. Hist. of Ireland*, p. 373). It is much as if we found a series of rules for an All England Eleven, admission to which was made conditional upon the applicant's scoring 1000 runs per innings, and bowling the opposite eleven with consecutive balls.

PAGE 43. *Scotch Origin of the Metrical Revolution.*

Cf. Dr. Hyde's *Literary History of Ireland*, ch. xxxix. Dr. Hyde finds the earliest trace of the new system in the poems of Mary, daughter of Alaster Rua MacLeod, born in 1569.

I may fittingly close with a few words of advice to students who wish to advance the interpretation of the Ossianic legends by original work. Very much remains to be done before we can form a clear idea of their origin, nature, and development, and even without a knowledge of Gaelic, much assistance may be rendered by any one willing to take a little trouble. Thus, a careful comparison of the subject-matter of the cycle as presented in the *Colloquy* and in the later recorded *ballads*, cannot fail to

throw much light upon the problems involved, as would also comparison of the specific Scotch and Irish forms of the *ballads*. But, of course, such comparisons are likely to be far more fruitful if made by Gaelic students. The majority of the Ossianic texts have come down to us in a form differing but slightly from the spoken language, whether in Ireland or Scotland; they are thus accessible to any one who knows the spoken language. At the same time these texts are, to a very large extent, remodellings of much earlier ones, they preserve many archaic words, constructions, and traces of early metrics, and thus afford an excellent bridge to the study of the mediæval literature. Moreover, they offer by far the best means of following the differentiation of Irish-Scotch Gaelic which has taken place within the last four centuries.

A number of interesting points offer themselves for investigation: the *dramatis personæ* of the cycle, their names, attributes, body of incidents with which they are specially connected; the *locale* of the cycle, the way in which it has been adapted to various districts of Gaeldom; the historic basis of the cycle, the way in which it has affected or been affected by the traditional romantic element; the specific relation of the Irish and Scotch versions; the specific relation of the prose and poetic versions and the determination of their respective ages by linguistic tests; the metrical system of the poems and its relation to mediæval Irish metrics; the presence of dialectic traits in the texts, &c.

It is only by detailed investigations such as these that the foundations can be laid for a real history of Irish romantic literature. I sincerely trust the foregoing pages will not only induce a certain number of students, whether Gael or Cymry or English, to take up the work of investigation for themselves, but will also be found of some assistance to them, at all events at first.

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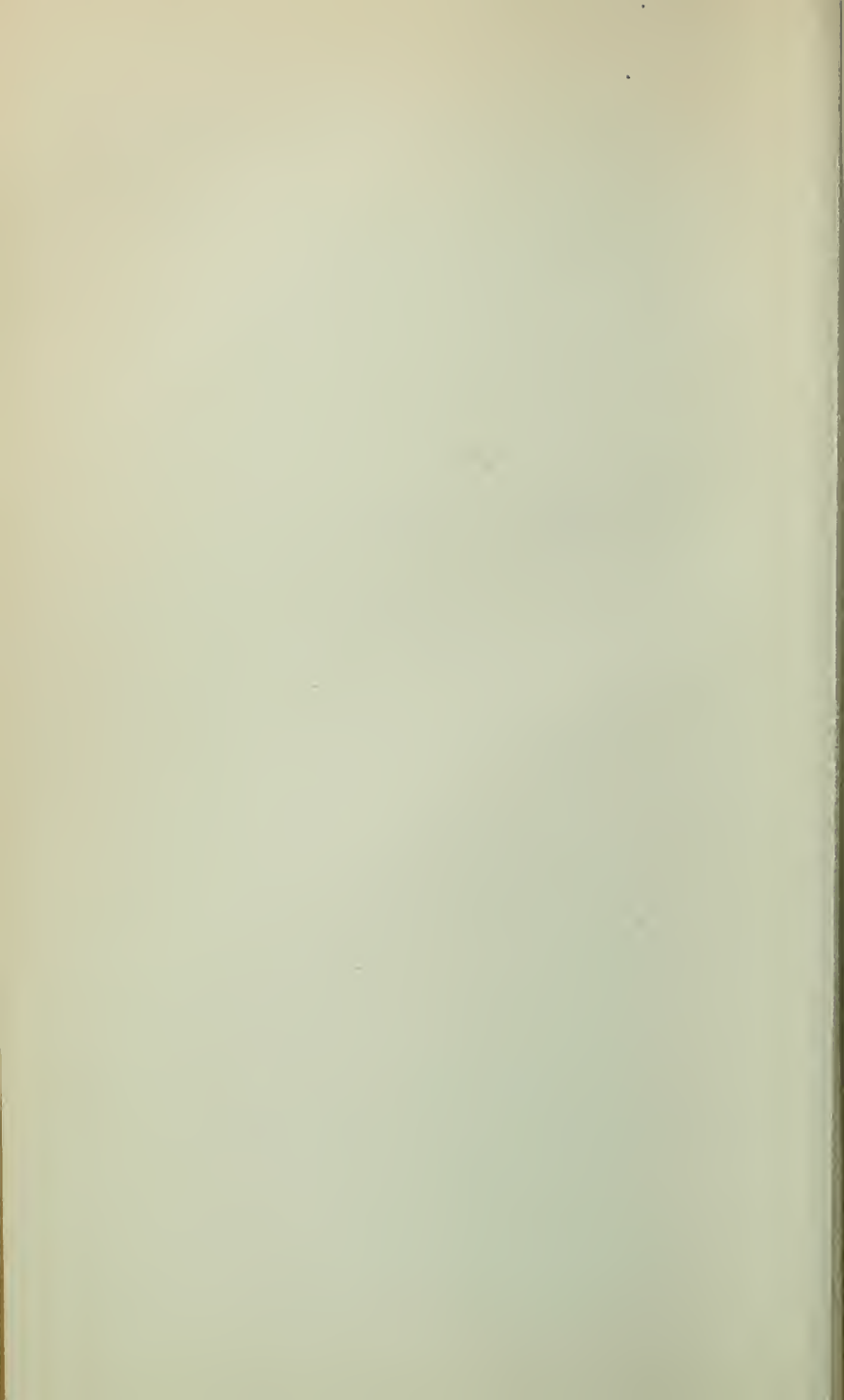
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PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

The following study has been designed as a companion to the earlier essay on "King Arthur and his Knights." No series dealing with Medieval Romance could claim to be in any sense complete were the great cycle which gave an impetus to the evolution of European romantic literature omitted. A complete account is as yet hardly possible however; many of the principal texts are still unedited, and students are largely dependent upon travaux d'ensemble completed many years ago. But the process of editing texts is proceeding steadily, and students who desire a closer acquaintance with the cycle will see from the Bibliography appended that a considerable amount of material is already available; we may reasonably hope that a few years will place us in possession of critical editions

of all the leading texts of the Charlemagne and its subsidiary cycles.

PARIS, March 1901.

A few slight changes have been made in the text, and the Bibliography has been brought up to date, otherwise this second issue is unaltered.

JESSIE L. WESTON.

PARIS, September 1905.

THE CHARLEMAGNE ROMANCES

*“Ne sont que trois matières à nul home entendant
De France, de Bretagne, et de Rome le grant.”*

THE Middle Ages were, as we know, the ages of Romance; Romance embodied in Prose—pseudo-historic chronicles, pseudo-biographical accounts of noted heroes; in Poetry—short *lais*, longer poems (metrical romances as we call them), some independent, the greater number falling into groups round some one central figure, and in their entirety forming what we call cycles of Romance. To the mind of a writer of the twelfth century, whose words are quoted above (Jean Bodel, author of *La Chanson des Saisnes*), there were three of such cycles, and to them alone might the attention of a poet of that day be worthily directed; and of these cycles the respective centres were Charlemagne, Arthur, and Alexander.

To-day this seems a somewhat inadequate method of classification, ignoring as it does the great mass of Northern tradition (Siegfried is

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surely a hero worthy of attention), yet it provides those who pursue the study of mediæval literature with a useful formula of designation for the two great bodies of French romance, the cycles of Charlemagne and of Arthur; the *Matières* of France and of Britain.

In the introductory number of these studies the Charlemagne romances have been alluded to, and incidentally discussed, but the subject matter of the study, *The Influence of Celtic upon Mediæval Romance*, was naturally far more closely connected with the second branch of Romantic literature, the Arthurian cycle; with Charlemagne Celtic legend has but little to do. In its later stages, when the *Matière de France* came into contact with the Arthurian story, the very soul of which is Celtic, it borrowed certain features from the *Matière de Bretagne*, but even then the fairy element, inseparable from the latter, presents itself partially, at least, under a Teutonic form. It was the *Matière de Bretagne* rather than that of France which was discussed in the opening study of this series. In the fourth number the various romances constituting the Arthurian cycle were described and classified, and in the fourteenth the Grail romances, forming a distinct section of that cycle with which their connection is late and artificial, was similarly

treated; but so far the Charlemagne cycle has not received the notice which its importance demands.

It is natural that alike to English writers and English readers the cycle which Jean Bodel reckoned second in value should stand first in charm and attraction; indeed, it may be doubted whether those for whom he wrote did not judge even as we do; in purely *literary* value the Arthurian cycle is probably superior to that of Charlemagne; the latter can count on its roll no such names as those of Chrétien de Troyes, Hartmann von Aue, or Wolfram von Eschenbach.¹

So far as the French literary presentment is concerned, the Charlemagne cycle is the elder, and the poems composing it, though the versions that have descended to us are not the earliest versions of the tales they tell, are as a rule cast in a form more primitive than that adopted by the writers of the Arthurian cycle. The prevailing form of the French Arthurian romance, one not found before the twelfth century, is a poem of eight syllabic lines, each pair rhyming; whereas in the Charlemagne *Chansons de Geste* we find *laisses* or *tirades* of varying length distinguished by a monorhyme, with, in the earliest copies, a vowel asso-

¹ In saying this I do not ignore the high epic value of the *Chanson de Roland*, I rather refer to a conscious effort after perfection of literary form.

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nance prevailing throughout the *laisse*. This metrical form may be compared with the alliterative verse which in the Germanic languages was replaced by various forms of the rhyming couplet or stanza. Yet, in so far as the subject matter is concerned, dealing as it does largely with mythic and pre-historic elements, the Arthurian cycle may be deemed the older.

Before entering into a detailed discussion of the romances dealing with the *Matière de France*, it will, I think, be not unprofitable to make clear to our own minds the distinctive characteristics of these two great bodies of romance; both of them of extreme importance in the history of literature, yet differing so widely the one from the other that even where they have come into contact the influence resultant has been of the slightest and most superficial character. In general terms we may express this difference by saying that the groundwork of the Arthurian cycle is mainly mythical, that of the Charlemagne cycle mainly historical. This does not imply that there are no historical elements in the former cycle, and no mythical in the latter, or that, as contrasted with the great Emperor of the Franks, Arthur is a mere creation of the imagination. On the contrary, in all probability the leading lines of the Arthur-legend proper, the King's fights with the Saxons, his betrayal by wife and nephew, and

death in battle have a foundation in fact, while the Charlemagne of legend is in many respects a wide departure from the Charlemagne of history. But the real charm and abiding fascination of the Arthurian story lies in the realm of fancy and not of fact—*realms*, perhaps we should rather say, for the student of Arthurian romance is free of more than one kingdom: the land of faëry whose horizon is lost in the mists of Celtic heathendom, and the brighter, but no less elusive, land where ideal chivalry has sworn a close alliance with Christian mysticism.

It is true that not all chronicled in the Charlemagne romances has its parallel in historic reality; myth has certainly played a part in the stories of the hero's birth and early trials, but in its main lines the character of these romances is determined by historic facts. Such heroes as Huon de Bordeaux and Girard de Viane may be creatures of imagination, but the struggles of the feudal nobles against their over-lord are facts of stern reality; Vivien may never have lived, and rashly vowed, and shed his blood heroically at the gates of Arles, but at least the varying fortunes of the contests between Christian and Saracen for the fertile lands of Southern France are as historical as the fights of our ancestors with Saxon and Dane; and if Ganelon never betrayed his king and country, yet Roland died at Roncevaux.

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Again, the Charlemagne story has its supernatural element, but it is not that of wizardry and faëry as in the Arthurian story; there is no shape-shifting Merlin, no treacherous Morgain, or beneficent Lady of the Lake. Nor is it laden with wondrous hints and revelations of divine doctrines and mysteries as in the Grail romances. The supernatural machinery is celestial and strictly simple; a guardian angel watches by the emperor's pillow, and shields him from his foes; in answer to his prayer a hart shows his army the ford across the swollen stream; at his death St. James of Compostella is beheld in a vision casting into a balance, wherein the devil weighs the emperor's good and evil deeds, the churches and shrines Charlemagne has erected in his honour.

When, in the last stage of its development, the fairy element enters the Charlemagne cycle it is manifestly due to the influence of Arthurian romance; thus Huon of Bordeaux is aided by Oberon, the fairy king (who is, indeed, rather a Teutonic elf (*albe*) than a Celtic fairy), but Oberon is the son of Morgain, and the rightful heir to his kingdom, with whom Huon must come to terms, is Arthur. Ogier and Renouart alike live on in fairyland (though each is supposed to have ended his days as a monk!), but that fairyland is Avalon. The supernatural element proper to the legend is presented under

the simplest and most obvious form, that of direct Divine protection.

That the characterisation of the Charlemagne cycle should be more forcible than that of the Arthurian is only what we should expect; the authors of the *Chansons* were dealing with real men and women, like to, if not of, themselves. Charlemagne plays a far more important rôle than does Arthur. The British king is, after all, little more than a picturesque centre for a series of adventures in which he himself takes no part. He certainly leads his hosts to battle, but it must be admitted that the wars of the Arthurian story are its least interesting and most wearisome portion; otherwise, Arthur presides in a dignified manner at feasts, and invites adventures, which his knights achieve; as a personality he is not convincing.

And of his knights Gawain, with all his grace and courtesy, has about him that note of elusiveness that makes one realise that his proper destination is, like Arthur, the land of faëry. Lancelot is but a stage lover; Galahad a painted-window saint. Perceval and Tristan, as we meet them first, are indeed human, very creatures of flesh and blood, but the Arthurian story is not content to leave them so, the former it turns into a being scarcely less shadowy than Galahad, the latter into a lover as conventional as Lancelot.

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But in the Charlemagne romances it is otherwise. The old Emperor, with his long white beard, is a majestic figure, which even the hint of years impossibly prolonged cannot rob of its reality. His intense family affections, his uncontrolled temper, violent fits of rage, savage revenge and unreasoning tyranny are all real. We feel the relationship between him and Roland to be no mere literary convention. The younger man, with his fierce temper, indomitable pride, and reckless courage, is exactly what we should expect Charlemagne's next of kin to be. Oliver, equally brave but less hot-headed, ready to temper his valour with discretion, is quite as real as his friend. Very real, too, that doughty champion of the church militant, Archbishop Turpin; and Ganelon, whose treason is in truth the attempt of a cowardly man to revenge himself upon one who has thrust him against his will into a post of danger.

“ Rollanz m'fors-fist en or et en avoir,
Pur que jo quis sa mort et sun destreit;
Mais traïsun nule n'en i otrei.”

Convincing, too, is William of Orange; now battling valiantly against the overpowering force of his Saracen foes; now melting into tenderness over his dying nephew; and again wrathfully demanding aid from his pious and peace-loving

brother-in-law, King Louis—who wishes himself elsewhere. The impression left upon us is that if these heroes did not really live, they might well have done so. We are not surprised that in his journey through the other world Dante beheld a goodly group of souls of the Charlemagne heroes, while of the Arthurian he saw none, save Tristan. Apart from their literary interest, the Charlemagne cycle appeals rather to the student of History, the Arthurian cycle to the student of Folk-lore.

The literary development of the two cycles not only sets the above-noted differences in a vivid light, but illustrates their true nature, and enables us to realise the history reflected in the Charlemagne cycle. The great Emperor died in 814, and with him died, as we can see, the conception of a France forming an integral portion of a vast Germano-Roman Empire. The warriors who followed Clovis and Dagobert, the companions of Charles the Hammer and of Pepin the Little, had in the course of centuries been putting off their Germanhood, been differentiating themselves from their kinsmen across the Rhine. The popular songs commemorating the mighty feats of Meroving and Karling kings, songs of which monkish chroniclers have preserved us a few scraps in their barbarous verse, or of which they have partially rendered the substance in their dreary prose—these songs, originally German, gradually

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passed into *Roman*, the language of the conquered race, as the Germanic element weakened. After Charlemagne's death his empire broke up, the *Roman* portion was cut definitely loose from the German-speaking world, and in less than a century the last traces of German speech vanished. The descendants of Frankish and Burgundian conquerors became French, and every fragment of German hero-song either put on a *Roman* dress or else died out. Small wonder if in the process the historic basis was shifted, if the deeds of earlier chiefs and warriors got transferred to the great Emperor. The fame and achievements of the latter would indeed have sufficed to inspire popular minstrels; but he also inherited the renown of many predecessors, and thus the earliest singers of his glory found themselves from the outset in possession of no inconsiderable stock of poetic material. The songs accumulated during the ninth century, and the decadence of the later Carolingians, threw into stronger relief the prowess and fame of Charlemagne.

As early, perhaps, as the first third of the tenth century, certainly by the middle of the century, *Chansons de Geste*, as distinguished from the popular songs on which they were based, had begun to appear, professing to narrate events of Charlemagne's lifetime. Throughout the tenth, eleventh, and early twelfth centuries these *Chan-*

sons were being enlarged, worked over, adapted to cyclic requirements. These two hundred years were fertile in strong characters, in fierce passions, in events and movements which transformed the old Franko-Roman Empire into modern France. The Carolingian polity decayed and passed away; the Capets, embodying the aspirations and ideals of a new nationality, rose to power, and founded a monarchy destined to last for eight hundred years, and to incarnate, far more than was the case in England, the national genius. The pangs and throes which accompanied the birth of modern France were fierce and prolonged; Norman and Saracen assailed from without; king and feudatory grappled in deadly struggle within. All this we find mirrored in the *Chanson de Geste*. Itself the record of a nation's formation, it exercised, we cannot doubt, a formative influence, the force of which it were hard to overestimate. Germanic in its pristine essence as it was, Germanic as it remained in many of its animating ideas, it is in its highest moments a magnificent record of French patriotic feeling, an ardent fosterer of devotion to the fair land apostrophised by Roland—

“Tere de France, mult estes dulz païs!”

From this, the creative period of the French epic, we possess comparatively little in an authentic and ungarbled form. Chief of what has come down to us is the earliest version of the *Chanson*

de Roland, and even this, there can be little doubt, represents a fairly advanced stage of development. The great bulk of Charlemagne romances belong to a period reaching from the early twelfth into the fourteenth century. The main outlines of the *Chanson de Geste* had been determined, its leading types of character and incident had been settled, it had acquired a prodigious stock of conventions, it still in a large measure reflected the religious and social ideas of the time; thus it could not escape the hands of the adapter, the rearranger, the hack writer who thought more of dressing up time-honoured stories according to the literary fashion of the moment than of preserving their original spirit and form. From the middle of the twelfth century it was exposed to the competition of the Arthurian stories—a competition against which, as we have seen, it largely defended itself by adopting the tone and style and temper of its rival.

How different was the fate of the Arthurian romance on French soil! It came into French hands with a stock of incidents and characters, above all with an æsthetic, and what, in default of a better term, must be styled an ethical character of its own, which persist despite the modifications imposed by the alien French genius. Its period of evolution is comparatively short; in from fifty to one hundred years it runs its full course; its

development is not determined by nor does it mirror the political situation or the political changes of the period. Vast and far-reaching social changes it does indeed herald and record, but indirectly and symbolically, not, as is the case with the *Chanson de Geste*, directly and realistically. The one body of literature is a monument of French intellect and French artistry exercising themselves upon an alien and imperfectly comprehended subject matter; the other is the nation typified, recording as it does its fierce birth-pangs, its wild and dour *enfances*, the exultant spirit of its early manhood.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the popularity, in mediæval times, of the Charlemagne cycle, or its importance as a factor in the history of European literature. In Italy it was the parent of a literature scarcely less extensive than that from which it sprang; indeed, the evolution was more complete. Italy yields pseudo-historical chronicles and metrical romances representing the legend at every stage: from that of historic reality, as typified by the rough-hewn figures of Roland and Oliver at the portal of Verona Cathedral, to that of pure fantasy, as in the *Orlando Amoroſo* and *Orlando Furioso*. In Spain the Charlemagne story, as related in the *Chronica* of Alfonso X., gave impetus to the formation of a national cycle, the heroes of which—Bernardo del

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Carpio, the children of Lara, and the Cid—should rival in popularity the heroes of the earlier *gestes*. In Scandinavia and in Germany the romances found translators and imitators, while in England we fail to realise that our *Sir Bevis of Hampton* is but an imitation of a French poem, and is reckoned by scholars as an offshoot of the cycle; while a nobleman and statesman like Lord Berners thought the translation of the tale of *Huon of Bordeaux* a task not unworthy of his time and labour. And have not we here in England the honour of possessing, in the MS. of the Bodleian Library, the oldest known copy of the most famous song of the cycle, the *Chanson de Roland*?

To undertake to give, in the small compass of one of these studies, an adequate account of so large and important a body of literature (M. Leon Gautier, in his *Épopées Françaises*, reckons *eighty* chansons as belonging to what he terms “la geste du roi” alone, without considering the subordinate cycle of the Narbonnais) would of course be impossible; the utmost that can be done is to describe the general character of the cycle, the lines into which it falls, and note the romances which will best repay the attention of the ordinary student of literature. Those who desire a more detailed account will do well to consult M. Leon Gautier’s monumental work, *Les Épopées Françaises*, or the shorter but no less

scientific, and, it may be, better arranged *Histoire Poétique de Charlemagne*, by M. Gaston Paris.

The dividing line of the Charlemagne romances is less individual than in the case of the Arthurian cycle; there, it is comparatively easy to classify the romances according to the knight who is hero of the tale. The leading heroes of the Round Table form so many centres round which the romances respectively group themselves, and the collective mass of these smaller groups or subsidiary cycles make up the great Arthurian legend. But with Charlemagne and his peers this guiding principle will no longer serve us. There are certainly many romances borrowing their title from the hero of the adventures they relate, but none of Charlemagne's warriors save William of Orange, the Marquis *au court nez*, have anything like such a body of romance connected with them as have Gawain, Perceval, or Lancelot, or can fairly be described as hero of a "cycle." The Charlemagne romances deal rather with families than with individuals; they are *Chansons de Geste*,¹ lays dealing with the

¹ The translation of the word *Geste* is somewhat difficult: the meaning appears to have been originally chronicles = feats, then the feats or actions of a particular family = family or race. In this sense M. Gautier employs it, but I incline to think that the earlier meaning is the more correct; the concluding words of the *Chanson de Roland*, "Ci falt la Geste que Turoldus declinet," cannot possibly have the signification of *race* or *family*.

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feats of a race rather than of a person. The tendency is to look upon qualities, not as the individual characteristics of *one* member of a family, but as the natural and inevitable inheritance of all. Valour and loyalty, cowardice and treachery, alike pass from father to son. Thus one group of poems deals with the heroic virtues of the descendants of Garin de Montglane, another with the treacherous race of Doon de Mayence.

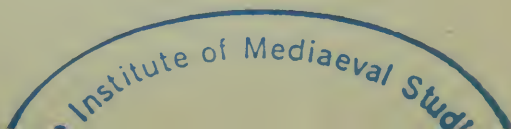
But the more convenient method of classification, that followed by M. Gaston Paris, is to group the romances according to their subject matter as relating to the Emperor, for Charlemagne, as we have noted above, plays a far more important part in his cycle than does Arthur. Following these lines, we shall find one group of poems dealing with the personal history of the monarch, his birth, his youthful adventures, his domestic trials, his fabled journey to the East, and final coronation of his son as his successor. A second and more important group deals with his various wars, principally those with the Saxons and the Saracens,¹ and is connected with the subsidiary but highly interesting cycle of the Narbonnais, the heroic family of Aimeri de Narbonne, whose son, William of Orange, is the

¹ For romantic purposes the wars with the Lombards practically do not count, as the authors of the romances have largely confounded them with the Saracens. We shall refer to this again in connection with *Ogier le Danois*.

champion of Christianity against the Moslem invaders of the South of France. The third subdivision includes the romances which relate the internecine struggles of the great vassals with their over-lord, and counts among its number some of the most popular legends of the whole cycle.

While thus practically following historical lines, the compilers of the *chansons* have, however, by no means limited themselves to events occurring during the reign of the great Emperor, but freely transfer incidents from one period to another at their pleasure, ascribing to Charlemagne's reign what really happened under his predecessor, Charles Martel, or his successor, Charles le Chauve, and presenting the heroes of the *gestes* as living now under Charlemagne, now under his son Louis, thus involving the attainment of a truly patriarchal age. According to the author of the *Chanson de Roland*, Charlemagne was over two hundred years old at the date of Roncevaux, and, to rightly understand the historical background of the cycle, we must bear in mind that the conditions, social and political, there represented actually obtained for some three hundred years or so, and were by no means limited to the period covered by the reign of the son of Pepin. The anachronism exists, but it is not of such a nature as to destroy the value of the poetical representation.

In the romances dealing with the youth of



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Charlemagne¹ we are on mythical rather than on historical ground. The story of his mother, *Berte aux grans piés*, is the familiar and oft-told tale of "The False Bride," the waiting-maid substituted for her mistress, and as such belongs to the domain of Folk-lore. Equally the tale of his youthful adventures, when he flies from the death by poison prepared for him by the sons of the false maid, and under the name of *Mainet* takes refuge with the King of Spain, frees him from his enemies, and marries his daughter, is a creation of fiction, and has no historical basis. The chronicle of Eginhard distinctly states that nothing definite concerning Charlemagne's youth was known, and the author therefore judged it inadvisable to write of it. But it seems doubtful whether the name by which the great Emperor is known did not take its rise in this popular fiction, and Charlemagne be not derived from *Charles Mainet*, the two names being often coupled together, rather than from *Carolus Magnus*. In any case it is to be regretted that so many English writers of the present day substitute the common-place translation Charles the Great, for the time-honoured and far more impressive Charlemagne.

These tales, and other scattered legends relating

1 I only refer in the text to the more important members of each subdivision; they will be found fully enumerated in the bibliographical appendix.

to the personality of the great Emperor, are to be found in the vast compilation of the Venice Library, consisting of a number of the *Chansons* collected together under the name of *Charlemagne*; also in the Icelandic *Karlomagnus Saga*, which latter, however, begins the record of his adventures at a rather later date. A German poem, *Karl Meinet*, has preserved the account of his residence in Spain.

Purely fabulous, too, are the accounts of Charlemagne's journey to Jerusalem, accompanied by his twelve peers, and the extravagant feats they perform in fulfilment of their *gabs* or boasts; and of the false accusation of his Queen Blanche fleur, by the traitor Macaire—a version of which, under the title of *La reine Sibille*, enjoyed a widespread popularity.

The real interest of the legend lies not in Charlemagne's domestic life, but in his public actions; the energy with which he defended Christianity, and consolidated the Empire. This is, as we have said above, the historical element of the legend which, reflected in the romances, constitutes the distinctive feature and real importance of the cycle. The Emperor's object was obtained only at the cost of wars, foreign and domestic, and with such struggles the majority of the romances are concerned.

For poetical purposes the foes of the Emperor beyond his border were the Saxons and the

Saracens ; both were alike enemies of God and of Holy Church, but the poems dealing with the latter are not only more numerous, but strike a stronger and a truer note. This may, of course, be largely owing to the fact that much of the struggle was fought out on the soil of France, and the reality of the contest was thus more forcibly brought home to the imagination of the writers. The gulf of nationality, too, was wider ; there was less difference between the barbarous Saxon and semi-civilised Frank, both white races, than between the latter and the dusky hordes that swarmed from Africa through Spain into Southern France, even though these latter might be representatives of a civilisation older than that of the West. Wotan and Thor, barbarous as were their rites, never seem to have raised half as much horror and antagonism in the minds of mediæval Christians as did the fabulous gods of the Saracens, Mahmoud, Termagant, and Apollo ! In mediæval romance the iconoclastic followers of Islam are represented as idolaters of a monstrous type, a quintessence of all the evils of paganism and heathenism, and they are provided with a motley pantheon borrowed from classic tradition, supplemented by the fertile imagination of romancers. Over and over again these heathen hordes are represented as besieging Rome, sometimes as having gained possession of the Imperial city, and holding in their power the most

precious relics of Christendom. More than once Charlemagne marches to the relief of *l'Apôtre*—as the Pope is generally termed in French romance—which relief is as a rule effected by a single combat between one of the Christian Paladins, and a giant more or less malicious, more or less willing to be converted, representing the Saracen host. It is the “motif” of David and Goliath repeated *ad nauseam*.

For such romances as *Aspremont*, *Les Enfances Ogier*, and *Fierabras*, there is no real foundation in history. The most that can be said is that they represent a distorted reminiscence of the siege of Rome by the Lombards.

But when we come to the group of poems dealing with Charlemagne's expedition to Spain, and culminating in the *Chanson de Roland*, we are on surer ground: history has indeed been modified under the influence of the Saracen nightmare, but we are dealing with modification, not with invention. Briefly related, the facts as chronicled by Eginhard and others are these:—In 778 two Moorish emirs from Spain presented themselves before the Emperor and declared their desire to become his vassals. Encouraged by this, Charlemagne marched with a large army into Spain, besieged and took Pampeluna, and laid siege in vain to Saragossa. (This part of the expedition is found, much embellished, in the following romances: *L'Entrée en*

Espagne, La Prise de Pampelune, and Gui de Bourgogne.) On the return of the army to France, the rear guard was surprised by the Gascons in the defile of Roncevaux, in the Pyrenees, and practically exterminated, Roland, prefect of the marches of Brittany, being among the slain. M. Leon Gautier remarks that this defeat must have been of far more importance than the chroniclers care to admit. Certain it is, that they pass over in but few words an event which has left an indelible impression on the popular mind, and the echoes of which can be caught at every subsequent period of French history. It is probable, too, that the Saracens lent a helping hand to the Gascon ambushade. It is certain that tradition has forgotten the real authors of this shattering blow to the Emperor's prestige, and attributes it to the hereditary foe of Christianity, the Moslem.

But whatever be the true history of Roncevaux, the legend is the culminating point of the Charlemagne tradition. French scholars have vied with each other in praise of the *Chanson de Roland*, its dignity, its simplicity, and the lofty tone of courage, devotion, and patriotism which inspires it, and any unprejudiced critic must largely agree with them. It is not the work of a finished poet like Chrétien de Troyes, it has not the easy literary grace which marks the *lais* of Marie de France, but the force and directness of its language, and the

universality of the feelings to which it makes appeal, can never fail to awake a response. We sympathise alike with Roland in his desire to fight unaided the unequal combat; with Oliver in his calmer appreciation of the overwhelming odds against them, and his vain attempts to induce his headstrong friend to realise the truth; with Archbishop Turpin as he solemnly absolves the doomed army, and, having thus performed his duty as a Christian and cleric, gives valiant account of himself as man and warrior. All alike are inspired by one spirit, by the desire that none shall hereafter sing *male cançun* regarding their end.

Perhaps the most impressive and affecting part of the poem is the lament of Charlemagne over the dead body of his heroic nephew, when in pathetic words he paints the picture of his return to France, how he shall sit throned in the hall of Laon, and the representatives of the races subdued by Roland's aid shall come before him and ask tidings of the valiant captain of his host, and he must needs answer, "In Spain he lieth dead!" Then they, taking courage at the tidings, shall rebel against him, and who shall put them down? The poem might well have ended here, as indeed, in the earlier versions, it doubtless did. The defeat of the Saracen army, and the punishment meted out to Ganelon and his race, come somewhat as an anti-climax.

It may be worth while to ask here, what is the historic foundation for the heroic character of Roland? The chronicle of Eginhard, relating the catastrophe of Roncevaux, simply says: "Anselmus comes palatini, *et Hruodlandus Britannici limitis præfectus*, cum aliis compluribus interficiuntur."¹ Thus, here, Roland is simply prefect of the marches of Brittany, and no word is said of his relationship to the Emperor. It may seriously be doubted whether such a relationship did, in fact, exist. History records that Charlemagne had but one sister, who early became a nun, and thus could not possibly have been the mother of Roland. The relationship of uncle and nephew, as subsisting between the royal centre of an epic cycle and the hero of that cycle, is so general (*e.g.* the instances of Conchobar and Cuchulinn, Finn and Diarmid, Mark and Tristan, Arthur and Gawain), that it does not seem improbable that the Charlemagne legend may have been affected by the prevailing tradition. This supposition is strengthened by the fact that certain twelfth century texts represent Roland as not merely the *nephew*, but also the *son* of the Emperor, a feature manifestly borrowed from tradition, and highly primitive in character. Such is the relation between Sigmund and Sinfiotli in the Volsunga-

¹ Eginhard, *Vita Caroli IX.*, quoted by M. Gautier, *Épopées Françaises*, ii. p. 363.

saga, Arthur and Mordred (in the first instance it was probably Gawain), and, in some versions of the story, between Conchobar and Cuchulinn. Thus, while we may take it as settled that history determined the character and fate of Roland, it yet seems probable that his relationship to Charlemagne was due to the influence of mythic tradition.

The twelve peers, Roland's companions, who, according to the poem, shared his fate at Roncevaux, owed their origin, M. Gautier considers, to Germanic custom. Among primitive German tribes it was the rule for certain warriors to associate themselves closely with the chief of the clan, to share with him his dangers and his spoil. They were his *pairs*. Hence, M. Gautier¹ thinks the *douze pairs*, their number being an imitation of that of the Apostles. M. Gaston Paris is, however, inclined to consider the institution of later date. The names of the peers vary in different poems, and two of the most famous of Charlemagne's warriors—Naimés de Bavière and Turpin—do not appear to have belonged to this body. According to *Girard de Viane*, it was Naimés who persuaded the Emperor to institute the order, as a kind of superior tribunal of judgment (cf. *supra*). The extreme popularity of the peers is shown by the introduction of their title into English mediæval

¹ *Épopées Françaises*, vol. ii. p. 173.

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romance, where we often find the word "*dosypere*" as equivalent for a valiant knight.

Compared with the *Chanson de Roland*, the poems dealing with the Saxon wars, *Guiteclin* and *La Chanson des Saisnes*, are far inferior in interest, marked by inordinate length and wearisome repetition of incident.

The third group of romances, those which relate the story of the Emperor's struggle with his rebellious vassals, is, taken as a whole, the most interesting of the three. Two among the number, *Renaud de Montauban* (*les quatre fils Aymon*) and *Huon de Bordeaux*, were in all probability the most popular and widely known of the Charlemagne romances, and have more or less retained that popularity to our own time.

Good mediæval translations of both are published by the Early English Text Society. The former gives a very fine picture of the relations between a vassal and his feudal lord, and the manner in which, among the nobler natures of the time, the obligations imposed by feudal service were realised and fulfilled. Charlemagne is entirely in the wrong in his treatment of the four brothers, but the old knight, Aymon, feels himself compelled by his oath of fealty to extend no aid or countenance of any kind to his sons. When in dire need they throw themselves upon the protection of their mother, who receives them with open arms, Aymon leaves

the castle at their disposal and goes forth ; he will not break his vow by aiding them, nor will he forbid his wife to follow the instincts of natural affection. Renaud, the principal hero of the tale, has as keen a sense of honour as his father ; when his clever and resourceful cousin Maugis, whose wiles have been the salvation of the brothers, casts the Emperor into a magic slumber, and thus conveys him into the castle he has been besieging, Renaud refuses to profit by what he deems a disloyal action, and sends Charlemagne again to his host in safety : a forbearance which, it must be owned, the Emperor's conduct does not justify ! The four sons of Aymon and their gallant steed, Bayard, were deservedly popular ; indeed, in folk tradition Bayard still roams the forests of Ardennes.

Here we may point out the gradual declension which the character of the Emperor, as represented in the romances, undergoes. In the *Chanson de Roland* he is a venerable but an imposing and dignified figure ; in *Renaud de Montauban* and *Huon de Bordeaux* he is capricious, tyrannical, given to fits of senile rage, cruel and unjust in the highest degree ; his barons openly flout him, and the authors do not hesitate to stigmatise him as *un vieil radoté*. How are we to account for so fundamental a change of conception ? It seems clear that it was due to historic

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causes, and was the outcome of a radical change in the relations between sovereign and subject. Under the feeble rule of the great Emperor's successors the power of the feudatory barons became increased to an alarming extent. The later romances, faithfully reproducing the characteristics of their age, have shifted the point of interest from the feeble and vacillating monarch to the rebellious but powerful vassal.

If the authors had maintained throughout the identity of the king during whose reign the romance was compiled, or remodelled, the picture would have been complete; but the position of Charlemagne as centre of the *Matière de France* was so firmly grounded, that they continued to retain him as representative of a system entirely alien to his methods. The relations between William of Orange and King Louis, in *Aliscans*, are quite possible, and a legitimate and artistic presentment of the situation as conceived under the reign of that king; postulated of Charlemagne they are incorrect and misleading. The character of the Emperor has really suffered from the continued popularity of his cycle, and the need of adjusting the romances to contemporary social conditions.

The romance of *Ogier le Danois*, consisting of no fewer than twelve branches, belongs, in so far as the older portion is concerned, to the earlier and

better period of the Charlemagne cycle, but it is somewhat marred by the barbarous fierceness and savagery of the hero.

Nevertheless, certain portions of the story have an epic force and vigour which raise them to the first rank of romantic legend. Such is the account of the prolonged siege of Chastelfort by the Emperor, a siege lasting for over seven years, during the progress of which all Ogier's men are slain; but the undaunted hero makes figures of wood, and clothing them in the armour of the dead knights, succeeds in deluding his foes into the belief that the castle is fully garrisoned. Also the charming story of the recognition of Ogier, after many years' imprisonment, by his faithful steed, *Broiefort*, which has been made the draught-horse of the neighbouring monastery, but retains sufficient spirit to carry its aged master to victory once more.

This story of a hero and his faithful steed was extremely popular in mediæval times, and we find it ascribed to Walter of Aquitaine (Waltharius) in the *Chronica Novalense*, an interesting monkish compilation of romantic legend; to Heimí, in the *Thidrek Saga*; and to William of Orange, in the *Moniage Guillaume*; in the two first cases the hero being a monk, and in the third a hermit—not a prisoner, as Ogier. The monastic version M. Gaston Paris holds to be the earliest form of

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the story, of which the *Chronica* probably gives the oldest extant version, the *Thidrek Saga* being probably borrowed from a Lombard chronicle.

In the older parts of the Ogier romance we have an account of Charlemagne's war with the King of the Lombards, at whose court the hero seeks shelter. This is an historic feature, and of the more value in that, as we have noted above, the tendency of the later romances is to ignore the wars with the Lombards, and in the traditions relative to the siege of Rome to replace them by the Saracens.

The character of the hero appears to be more or less founded on fact; there was certainly at Charlemagne's court a valiant soldier of the name of *Oggerius*, or Otkar, but his nationality is doubtful. Certain chronicles speak of him as of the family of Pepin, in which case he would, of course, be a kinsman of the Emperor. The title *Danois* is by some modern scholars held to be a misreading of the original *Ardennois*, and Ogier is thought to have been of the Ardennes rather than of Denmark. In its final stages the tale shows distinct traces of Celtic influence; and this modern scholars have strongly felt. Mr. Nutt, in the study already referred to, remarks that Huon and Ogier are "Arthurian heroes who have strayed by accident to the court of Charlemagne;" and the late William Morris, in that fascinating collection of legendary

tales, *The Earthly Paradise*, gives the story of *Ogier the Dane* to a Breton sailor. Nevertheless, in its essential spirit the tale appears to be Germanic rather than Celtic.

According to the testimony of the chroniclers, Ogier was one of the most popular of mediæval heroes, but the numerous romances connected with his name have not retained their popularity as have *Renaud de Montauban* and *Huon de Bordeaux*. To-day most of us probably only know him through the medium of Hans Andersen's tales, though but few realise that the slumbering Danish hero Olge Danske is identical with the paladin of Charlemagne.

Both the romance of *Ogier le Danois* and that of *Renaud de Montauban*, if classified according to the family method suggested by M. Gautier, would belong to the *Geste* of *Doon de Mayence*; but the fact that that scholar himself was obliged also to include them in the *Geste du roi* seems an argument for the simpler method adopted by M. Gaston Paris, and followed in these pages.¹

The tale of *Huon de Bordeaux* is less character-

¹ The romances belonging to the *Doon* family are found in a collected form in a MS. of the Montpellier Library. They are the following:—*Doon de Mayence*, *Gaufrey*, *Les Enfances Ogier*, *La Chevalerie Ogier*, *Aye de Arignon*, *Gui de Nanteuil*, *Parise la Duchesse*, *Maugis d'Aigremont*, *Vivien l'amachour de Monbranc*, *Renaud de Montauban*. Of these only the two mentioned above are of the first rank. *Parise la Duchesse* is a variant of the *Berte* and *Macaire* stories.

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istic of any special age. The interest lies rather in the marvellous adventures of the hero, and the aid and protection extended to him by the fairy king Oberon. It is a tale of faëry not only in the loose but in the strict sense of the word, Huon's adventures reproducing closely those of the hero upon whom a task is laid which he can only accomplish by supernatural aid familiar to us in so many fairy tales, and as such it is one for all time. From it Shakespeare borrowed his fairy king, and Weber the libretto of his opera.

Among the romances of this class *Girard de Viane*, one of the oldest, is interesting as giving the account of the first meeting between Roland and Oliver; they fight themselves into friendship beneath the walls of Viane.

In most of these tales Charlemagne is represented as in extreme old age, in fact, as we have shown above, an unreasoning dotard, *un vieil radoté*! We therefore feel that the situation depicted in the *Couronnement Loöys* is natural and inevitable; it may be considered as practically closing the cycle of Charlemagne and opening that of William of Orange, though there are, of course, poems dealing with the earlier history of that hero.

In the *Couronnement* we find the aged Emperor laying aside his crown in favour of his young son Louis, who, gentle and timid in disposition, shrinks from the responsibilities awaiting him. A

certain Hernaud, of the traitorous race of Ganelon, comes forward with an offer to rule the kingdom till Louis feels himself prepared to take up the reins of government, but *William Fierabras*, detecting the traitorous purpose concealed beneath the offer, fells the traitor to the ground, and announces that he will be the protector and champion of the young king, a task he loyally performs.

The historic personality underlying the epic figure of this William, the hero of the important cycle of the *Narbonnais*, is not clear. Investigation discloses even more forcibly than elsewhere in the cycle of how composite a texture it really is, and how it welds together in one picture, periods separated by the stretch of centuries, regions separated by the width of France. Monsieur Gaston Paris considers that the legendary hero represents a reminiscence of the feats of at least four historical Williams, *i.e.* William *Fierabras*, William *au court nez*, William of Toulouse, and William of Orange. Of these William *Fierabras* (who may, but this is doubtful, have borne the appellation *au court nez*) and William of Aquitaine, later of Orange, were contemporaries of the great Emperor, but the one belonged to northern, the other to southern France. William of Toulouse, undoubtedly an historical character, and one of whom we possess

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a fair amount of authentic record, belonged to the tenth century. His was a striking personality, and he seems to have attracted stories belonging to the earlier William of Orange. Moreover, in the epic, William, when old, turns monk, and here would seem to have borrowed traits from two southern French saints, S. William *du Désert* and S. William *le Pieux*. Certain it is that the titles *Fierabras*, *au court nez*, and *d'Orange*, are all applied to one hero. But in those days *William* was the most common of Christian names. In a certain assemblage of nobles out of five hundred present three hundred and eighty were William; a fact which goes far to explain any confusion of identity which may have crept into the legend.

According to the romances, however, the parentage and personality of this William, though his surnames may vary, are distinct enough. He is the son of Aimeri de Narbonne, a descendant of that Garin de Montglane who, as we mentioned at the outset of our study, represents the heroic family or *geste* of the cycle. An extensive Italian compilation of the fourteenth century, under the title of *Storie Nerbonese*, recounts all the doings of the valiant family of Narbonne.

M. Gautier reckons twenty-four *chansons* composing this cycle, but here we need only enumerate those directly connected with the life and deeds of

the hero, *Les Enfances Guillaume*,¹ *Siège de Narbonne*, *Le Charroi de Nîmes*, *La prise d'Orange*. These trace the history of William from his earliest years to his establishing himself as lord of Orange, from which city he has driven out the Saracens, and married the wife of their king. The loves of William and Orable, who in the later poems is known by her baptismal name, Guibourc, occupy a great portion of the story.

At this point another hero appears upon the scene, Vivien, the nephew of William, whose valiant deeds and untimely death appear to have been intended as a parallel to Roland in the earlier story. The poems directly connected with this young hero are *Les Enfances Vivien*, *Le Covenant Vivien*, and the famous *Aliscans*; this last being the crown and centre of the "William" cycle, even as the *Chanson de Roland* is of that of Charlemagne. Both poems relate the defeat of the Christians by the Saracens, and in both the catastrophe is due to the rashness of the youthful hero.

In the *Covenant Vivien* we learn how the youth, on receiving knighthood, makes a solemn vow never to retreat before the Saracens, a vow which even

¹ Perhaps it may be well to explain that *Enfances* is a technical term applied to the account of the deeds of a hero before he receives knighthood. The tendency of later research is to prove that the "William" cycle was of greater importance than generally supposed.

his uncle William, no model of prudence, condemns as unduly rash. A large Saracen fleet appears on the river beyond the plains of Aliscans (Aliscans-Aliscamps=Elysian Fields, and is the name of the famous cemetery beyond the walls of Arles). Vivien urges on his young comrades to attack them, which the lads do with an wholly inadequate force, and are put to the worse. Under pressure Vivien allows one of his cousins to ride to his uncle William and demand aid, and the poem of *Aliscans* opens at the conclusion of the fatal struggle. William has seen all his men slain, his young nephews, his brother's sons, taken captive, and is compelled to fly from the field. But first he must know the fate of Vivien; he seeks him at imminent risk to himself, and at last finds the lad mortally wounded, and at the point of death, beside a spring. The scene that follows is exceptionally fine; the count at first yields to a natural outburst of grief at the death of one so young and valiant, but suddenly he recalls himself to a sense of his duty. No priest is at hand; Vivien is dying fast; it devolves upon William as nearest of kin to render the consolations of religion. The warrior becomes a priest; taking the dying boy in his arms he rests his head against his breast and bids him confess his sins. Vivien can think of nothing save that he has broken his vow, and retreated before the enemy. William pronounces

absolution ; for the first time gives him *le pain béni*, and commends his soul to God.

“Dex reçoif s’arme par ton digne commant
Qu en ton sierviche est mors en Aliscans !”

This scene of the first communion and death of Vivien has been held by critics equal, if not superior, to that of the death of Roland.

The author of *Aliscans* is not a literary artist, he repeats himself, indulges in lengthy description, but the subject-matter with which he is dealing in the first half of the poem is exceptionally good, and he rises to the occasion. Very fine is the description of the arrival of William, a fugitive, and alone, disguised in the armour of a dead Saracen, at the gates of his own city of Orange. His wife does not know him in such guise ; William would never have returned without the lads he went to succour ; and not till the pursuers are close on his heels does Guibourc recognise and admit her husband. Then she shows herself the stronger of the two ; it is she who comforts the Count, broken down by the disaster which has overtaken his house, and bids him hasten at once to demand succour from King Louis ; she and her maidens dressed in armour, will delude the Saracens into the belief that Orange is fully garrisoned, and keep them at bay. William goes to the court of the king whom he has protected and aided, and who has wedded

his sister, only to be treated with scorn and contempt. This is one of the finest parts of the romance. Eventually Louis yields, in sheer terror of his truculent brother-in-law, and William is provided with a new army—and the poem with a new hero in the person of Renouart, the gigantic brother of William's wife, Guiboure, who, stolen from his people in early youth, is acting the part of scullion in Louis' kitchen.

The latter part of the poem is taken up with the recital of the valiant deeds of Renouart in the second battle of Aliscans, which results in a crushing defeat of the Saracens. Finally Renouart marries Aaliz, the king's daughter, and in the *Bataille de Loquifer* (a poem probably by the author of *Aliscans*, but much inferior to that work) is carried off to Avalon, where he combats the monster Chapalu in the presence of Arthur, King of Avalon.

The poem of *Aliscans* undoubtedly rests upon historical tradition; in the opinion of M. Leon Gautier, it represents the welding together of two widely separated events—the defeat of William of Aquitaine by the Saracens at Villedaigne in 793, and the defeat of the Saracens by William I., of Provence, in 976. The leading “motif” of the *geste* of the Narbonnais, the long-continued struggle between Christian and Moslem for the South of France, is genuinely historical.

The end of William's career is related in two romances, both bearing the same name, *Le Moniage Guillaume*, and generally referred to by scholars as *Moniage I.* and *Moniage II.*, in which we read how the hero eventually quitted the world and retired to the hermitage, where (after again issuing forth to combat the enemies of his country) he died in the odour of sanctity. A similar romance bears the name of Renouart, and relates how that hero also became a monk; but it is impossible to take any real interest in a figure so completely the creation of imagination. Renouart is never more than a serio-comic character, and distinctly out of place beside so strenuous a hero as William; nevertheless he appealed to the fancy of the Middle Ages, and was certainly a more living and persistent element in folk-tradition than the far more sympathetic Vivien.¹

With the battle of Aliscans it seems fitting that we should close this brief sketch of the great French cycle. That the Charlemagne romances will ever offer to English students so tempting a field of inquiry as that of the Arthurian legend is doubtful. The subject-matter of this latter, consisting as it does largely of the mythical elements which lie at the root of all history and all belief, must

¹ The story of scullion turned hero seems to have been popular in mediæval times. There is a version of it in the Low German Thidrek Saga.

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always make an appeal to a wider circle than that represented by professed students of history or literature. We have adopted Arthur as a national hero, and as such take a pride in his name and fame, but the interest of the Arthurian story lies deeper than our interest in Arthur the King, and the ideas he symbolises are not those which inspire the *Matière de France*. The Charlemagne legend, on the other hand, is of direct national interest; it appeals above all to the children and lovers of *La douce France*. Nor from a literary point of view is it of equal value. Probably the four best romances, in the opinion of literary scholars, would be reckoned to be the *Chanson de Roland*, *Renaud de Montauban*, *Huon de Bordeaux*, and *Aliscans*; but not one of these could bear comparison, as a piece of literature, with any one of the masterpieces of Arthurian romance. I have suggested above that it may be owing, in a great measure, to this deficiency in literary form, and consequent failure to satisfy the more exacting literary taste of the twelfth century, that the Charlemagne cycle was superseded so completely in popular favour by the Arthurian romances. If, however, we distinguish content from manner, the *Matière de France*, as an epic cycle, ranks above the Arthurian, which is not strictly epic; regarded in this light, the *Chanson de Roland* has few rivals. And were it only as a picture of

the impression produced by a great man upon the minds and imaginations of the people of his day, an unrivalled collection of documents showing how fancy deals with facts, and history becomes folk-tale, the *Matière de France* would be well worth our study; our fathers found pleasure in these old stories, and we shall not do ill if we follow their example.

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[I am indebted to Mr. Nutt for revising and bringing
the Bibliography up to date.]

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by Ivor B. John, M.A., Fellow
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1901

Welsh spelling and pronunciation are not nearly so difficult as they are popularly supposed to be.

With the exception of *y*, which is sometimes like *u* in *but* and sometimes like *ee* in *green*, every letter has an invariable value and is always pronounced.

The sounds represented by compound letters which give the written language a strange appearance are :

ch the guttural spirant (as in German).

dd the flat dental spirant pronounced like *th* in *breathe*.

ff representing the English sharp *f* as in *Fate*.
The single *f* in Welsh = English *v*.

ll which represents a spirant *l*, a sound impossible to represent in English, intermediate between *thl* and *fl*.

w (as vowel) = *oo* (*poor*), *u* = (approximately) *ee* (*green*), *e* = *ai* (*laid*), *a* = *ah*, *c* = *k*.

The proper names in this study offer little difficulty.

Piwyll = *Pooilh* (one syllable).

Pryderi = *Pridáiry*.

Manawyddan = *Manawúthan*.

Glyn Cuch = *Glin Keech*.

ADDENDUM ET CORRIGENDUM.

Page 51, at end of fourth paragraph add :

“There is also a long article in Welsh on the *Mabinogion* to be found in the Second Edition of the *Gwyddionadur*, from Prof. Anwyl's pen. Some of the views therein expressed have since been modified by the writer, but the article is of great value to the Welsh reader.”

Page 53, line 12, omit German.



THE FOUR BRANCHES OF THE MABINOGI

“THE very first thing that strikes one, in reading the Mabinogion, is how evidently the mediæval story-teller is pillaging an antiquity of which he does not fully possess the secret: he is like a peasant building his hut on the site of Halicarnassus or Ephesus; he builds, but what he builds is full of materials of which he knows not the history, or knows by a glimmering tradition merely: stones ‘not of this building,’ but of an older architecture, greater, cunninger, more majestic. In the mediæval stories of no Latin or Teutonic people does this strike one as in those of the Welsh.”

These words of Matthew Arnold express with marvellous insight the impression left upon the reader by the mediæval Welsh tales of which the origin and nature are discussed in the present study, and define with accuracy their interest and import for the student. The lover of literature will always turn to them for their intrinsic beauty; for the

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student they have the further charm of mystery, of possible survival from a past of which well-nigh all other remains have perished.

In the year 1849 Lady Charlotte Guest published the text and translation of a number of Welsh romances, all drawn from the fourteenth-century manuscript known as the Red Book of Hergest, save the romance of Taliessin, of which the only known MS. dates back to the seventeenth century. Four of these tales, entitled respectively Pwyll Prince of Dyfed, Branwen daughter of Llyr, Manawyddan son of Llyr and Math son of Mathonwy, form a series. At the head of the tale of Pwyll we find the words: *Llyma dechreu Mabinogi*, "Here is the beginning of the Mabinogi," and Branwen, Manawyddan, and Math are called respectively the second, third, and fourth branches of the Mabinogi. From the singular *Mabinogi* was formed a plural *Mabinogion*, which was used by Lady Guest to designate the entire collection published by her. But strictly speaking the term *Mabinogion*—or, to be quite precise, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*—only applies to the four tales cited above, and it is with these four that the present study is alone concerned.

The most casual reader of Lady Guest's collection cannot fail to notice that the Mabinogion proper (we retain the convenient term) differ greatly in important respects from the other

romances published by her. A word must be said about these. Two of them, *The Dream of Maxen Wledig* and the "Contention" (?) of *Lludd and Llevelys* have obvious affinity with the legendary history worked up by Geoffrey of Monmouth; *Kulhwch and Olwen*, *The Dream of Rhonabwy*, *The Lady of the Fountain*, *Geraint* (Tennyson's *Enid*), *Peredur*, introduce Arthur and other personages of the Arthurian cycle, but a distinction must be made: the first two have no affinity with any of the Arthurian romances handed down to us in French or German, whereas the last three have a close connection (the exact nature of which is a matter of dispute) with the Arthurian romances of the greatest twelfth-century French poet, Chrétien de Troyes, known respectively as *Yvain*, *Erec*, and *Le Conte du Graal*. Finally, the story of *Taliessin* has features and traits markedly akin to those of the Mabinogion proper, although it is formally connected through the personage of its hero with the Arthur cycle.

The earliest writers who brought this literature to the knowledge of the now Welsh world assumed that *Mabinogi* meant a youth, and that, as Stephens says in his *Literature of the Cymry*, the tales were "written to while away the time of young chieftains," that they were nothing but a collection of mediæval Welsh nursery or fairy tales. In reality, as Prof. Rhys has shown, the term *Mabinog*

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belongs to the Welsh bardic system, and denotes a kind of literary apprentice, a scholar receiving instruction from a qualified bard. *Mabinogi* meant the subject matter of a *Mabinog's* course, the literary stock-in-trade which he had to acquire. This correct appreciation of the force of the term not only enables us to perceive that the Mabinogion must, at the outset at least, have had another object beyond recreation; it also enables us to equate the Welsh collection with another famous mediæval work, the *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*. Snorri systematised and summarised the northern mythology in narrative form with the express object of aiding the Skald or Icelandic poet to master one of the main elements of his craft. Again, just as the Skalds used this mythology as a source of what they deemed poetic ornament, introducing allusions, periphrases, variations upon a mythic theme, the merit of which seems to have been measured by their obscure, artificial and contorted character, so Welsh bards in a number of poems which have come down to us make allusions to the personages and incidents of the Mabinogion, allusions of so wilfully obscure a character that if we had not the tales themselves we should be entirely at a loss to know what the bards were driving at. The fairy-tale, nursery-tale character of the Edda, as of the Mabinogion, is due to both bodies of literature belonging to the same early

mythic stratum of belief and fancy as the nursery tale; but whereas the latter is now deliberately restricted to that class of readers, children, who, psychologically, still belong in part to that early stratum, the former were intended to be and were taken seriously by grown-up men.

The foregoing remarks will show the lines upon which we propose to discuss the Mabinogion. They will be regarded as remains of a literature fashioned by a special literary caste, the bards, one of whose definite duties it was to preserve the mythic and heroic traditions of the race.

On seeking to date the tales we find that orthographical peculiarities in the manuscript point to an archetype or archetypes not later than the end of the twelfth century, and the tenth-eleventh century is the date generally adopted by scholars for the fixing of the Four Branches of the Mabinogi in the form in which we are acquainted with them. The chief reason for this opinion is as follows: After the Norman conquest of England the Arthur legend acquired immense popularity, and in the second half of the twelfth century over-ran the literature of all Europe; Wales shared in this movement, and most of the special Welsh Arthurian literature shows affinities with the continental forms. Now the tales with which we are dealing know absolutely nothing of this later Arthur story, and must have been

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composed before it attained the important position it holds in Welsh literature of the twelfth century.

This date, however, is only of importance in helping us to fix a *terminus ad quem*, for while some tales contain elements which may date from the eleventh century, others go back to the beginning not of recorded history, but of the history of the Aryan race.

The Four Branches of the Mabinogi take the form of prose narratives forming a more or less coherent whole, and are concerned with persons who, generally speaking, are treated as human beings, but who, at the same time, are credited with supernatural powers. In this lies their resemblance to folk- and nursery-tales: this is the peculiarity which has made many speak of the "*naïveté*" of these tales. If by "*naïveté*" is meant the fact that the supernatural is treated as the most natural thing in the world, and that the turning-points of the tales are magical quite as a matter of course, then they are "*naïve*": otherwise these productions of a complex bardic system can lay no more claim to "*naïveté*" than the rhapsodies known as the poems of Taliessin.

We have then to ask what is the source of this supernatural element? The characters are treated as human beings, and are often identified with historical or quasi-historical personages. If we accept the tales as originally told of human beings,

we must suppose that the supernatural elements were added entirely from the imagination of the writers of the tales. The other alternative is to take the personages of the tales for supernatural beings who came to be treated by the legend-mongers as human beings, but who, at the same time, retained their superhuman powers, upon which the incidents, and thus the very existence, of the tales depended.

In other words, we seek to know whether we are dealing with primitive mythology or with deliberate fiction. Analogy at once points out that we are dealing with the very lowest stratum of human thought, with primitive mythology, and the supernatural element in the Mabinogi is only to be understood if we regard it as a manifestation of this mythology.

The process which has taken place in the transmission of the Mabinogi down the ages has been one in which tales originally concerning gods (how these tales were formed at the outset does not now immediately concern us) became shorn of the idea that they really did concern gods, and were told as if of human beings possessing supernatural attributes. In fine, the Four Branches of the Mabinogi are nothing more nor less than degraded and adulterated mythological tales.

The fact that the Mabinogi formed the literary equipment of the apprentice bard implies the

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existence and importance of story-telling in bardic circles; and there certainly existed an enormous number of stories, legends, and tales, of which the Four Branches of the Mabinogi—chosen for some reason unknown to us (or, indeed, the choice may have been perfectly arbitrary) as the ones to be repeated by the apprentice of some school of bards—can only have formed a very small part. We have overwhelming proof of this. Firstly, in the Four Branches themselves; secondly, in other mediæval Welsh tales; thirdly, in the early Welsh poetry, chiefly that of the so-called Book of Taliessin; fourthly, in what we may call the “catalogue-poem” of the Graves of the Warriors; and fifthly, in the mediæval prose literature known as the Triads.

It would take too long to enumerate all the plain indications of the existence of other similar tales which are to be found in the Four Branches. This line of research has been exhaustively followed up by Professor Anwyl in his articles in the *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*.

The early Welsh poetry—that, for instance, collected by Skene in the “Four Ancient Books of Wales”—contains numerous allusions to characters mentioned in the Four Branches. These characters are referred to along with others in such a manner as to warrant us in believing that they are all of the same type. There are also allusions to

incidents in the Four Branches along with allusions to incidents the nature of which is unknown, but which must be similar. All these references are of such a nature—being, as already noted, utterly unintelligible but for our knowledge of the tales—as to preclude any idea of the tales being subsequent to the poems. They are, therefore, either references to the tales as we now actually have them, or to their prototypes. Little has been done in the way of satisfactorily dating these poems, but of those that have been dated by M. Loth (see note), several contain references of the above-mentioned type. These poems range in date from the ninth to the twelfth century, and so, if we accept M. Loth's dating, we may postulate the existence of a mass of legends of the type of the Four Branches at least as early as the ninth century.

Taking next the case of the Triads and the Verses of the Graves, we find that many of the Triads and the whole collection of Verses may be looked upon from one point of view as mere catalogues of tales; for, unless, in the case of the Verses, each of the warriors mentioned was of note, or, in other words, had some tale told of his prowess, his memory would not have been thus preserved. The same is true of the Triads. In the case of heroes, places and events mentioned, there must have existed a tale which justified that mention.

In other Welsh mediæval tales we have similar

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evidence of a huge wealth of Welsh stories. "Kulhwch and Olwen," for instance, which is an attempt to rejuvenate old material, coupled with a desire on the writer's part to air his own compendious knowledge of Welsh legend, contains enormous catalogues of personages, with their attributes, whom it would have been folly to name, were there not some object, in the way of recalling their story, in thus naming them.

In short, the evidence is overwhelming for the existence of a huge mass of legend of this type in Wales, and so we come back in another way to the point from which we started—namely, the fact that the Four Branches as they stand are a selection or a compilation of certain of these stories.

We have called these tales degraded from a mythological point of view. In fact, so far have they lost their original characteristics under the influence of oral tradition proceeding through long years amongst a people becoming more civilised, and under the influence of Christianity, that, if the Four Branches of the Mabinogi stood alone, it would be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to arrive at the original meaning of the legends. The fact already mentioned, of the crediting of personages otherwise human with superhuman attributes would be almost the only clue to the mythological "stratum" in the tales.

But, as we have said, the Four Branches do not stand quite alone; even in Welsh literature we have analogues and aids. Firstly, in the other mediæval tales we find, scattered up and down, a little help, for they too contain some of the original mythological *données*. We have also the early poems, but in this case, unfortunately, the help we get is far less than we have a reason to expect, owing to their obscure nature. We have again the Bruts (Chronicles), which aid us chiefly in picking out the historical and quasi-historical adulterations. We have also the mass of legendary literature dating from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries known as the Triads, and, finally, we have the legend of Taliessin, which, although late in the form in which we now have it (sixteenth-seventeenth century), is of equally early origin with the Four Branches, and is their closest analogue in Welsh literature. Going further afield, the abundant early Irish literature furnishes the greatest amount of help, and it is chiefly by comparison with it that the riddle of the Mabinogi may be read. Its greater extent renders the work of mythological identification easier; the Welsh characters corresponding to the Irish are thus also recognised as mythological.

Comparison with Irish literature reveals striking similarities between many Irish and Welsh tales,

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similarities which may be divided into two groups. Firstly, there are resemblances between the fundamental *données* of the tales, indicating as they do still closer resemblances between Welsh and Irish cycles of tales in their earlier stages. The Mabinogi have evidently been pieced together very like a mosaic, and it is palpably evident that, in the form in which we now have them, they are only a collection of more or less cleverly-joined fragments of earlier tales. Where, therefore, we find that many of these fragments exhibit a close connection with Irish legend, we are justified in supposing that the earlier forms of the Welsh tales bore a very great resemblance to those of Ireland. This is best seen on equating the characters. The children of Dôn, whom we meet in the story of Math, are undoubtedly equivalent to the Tuatha de Danann (the tribes of the Goddess Danu). These Irish beings are Irish gods, and the children of Dôn are possessed of such magic attributes as stamp them as gods of Welsh legend. Govannon, son of Dôn, the Welsh smith, can be none other than the smith Goibniu (genitive Goibnenn, the form nearest to the Welsh), of the Tuatha. Manawyddan mab Llyr is evidently the Manannan mac Lir of Ireland, the lord of the Otherworld, though not recognisable as such in the Mabinogi.

Owing to the degraded nature of the Welsh tales, and to their composite mosaic character,

the relative importance of the personages has been disturbed, and we ought to be quite prepared to find that personages playing very shadowy parts in the tales are really of great importance from the original point of view. This is true, for instance, of a character called Beli. He plays no distinct part in the Four Branches. He is but mentioned. He seems to be the husband of Dôn, though this does not appear from the tales, and he is probably to be equated with the Irish Bile, the father of Mile, the eponymous hero of the Milesians. Bile's realm was Spain, which, in the strongly euhemerised mediæval texts where alone this section of Irish mythic history is preserved to us, corresponds with the Otherworld or Hades.

Secondly, we have similarities between names and incidents in the tales which are not fundamental, but a great deal more superficial : cases where, undoubtedly, the Welsh have been borrowing from the Irish ; in other words, we have cases of direct influence of the Irish upon the Welsh story-tellers. In Branwen, for instance, the Llinon is evidently the Shannon, while in other tales of the Mabinogion we have forms like Esgeir Oervel for Sescenn Uairbheoil, Garselit for Gearr-Selut, whilst in Kulhwch and Olwen we have Cnychwr mab Ness for Conchobar mac Nessa.

How are these resemblances to be accounted for ?

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Two differing theories have been suggested. It is known that at the beginning of recorded history there existed a large number of Goidels (Irish Celts, though an incorrect expression for that period, explains whom we mean by Goidels) in West Wales, and the differences in the two theories depend upon the different manner of accounting for the presence of these Goidels.

One theory believes that the Goidels formed the first wave of Celtic immigration or conquest from the Continent. They were followed by the Brythons, that branch of the Celts to which the Gauls and Welsh belong, who drove their predecessors westward until, when recorded history begins, very few of the first Goidelic inhabitants survived in West Wales. The conquest of the Western part of North Wales by the North British Cunedda and his sons in the fourth century of our era, the first historical fact that emerges from the gloom and uncertainty of early tradition, would then appear to be the final crushing out of Goidelic resistance, after which the remaining Goidels would live peaceably with their conquerors and gradually amalgamate with them, adopting their language. The resemblance of Welsh to Irish legend is accounted for by those who hold this theory on the supposition that these Goidels transmitted their tales to the Welsh, and that the latter, developing them along their own lines, differen-

tiated them somewhat from their originals. This is, in outline, the theory held by Professor Rhys.

Professor Kuno Meyer, on the other hand, holds that there is no jot of evidence, historical, philological, or traditional, to justify the idea that a Goidel ever set foot in Britain except as a conqueror from Ireland. The Goidels found in Wales he treats as piratical invaders from Ireland in the second-fifth centuries. Relying upon the evidence of names, he says that the Irish tales were borrowed by the Welsh not earlier than the ninth century, and that they were handed over by oral tradition.

On reviewing these two theories we find that the first accounts in a fascinating manner, analogous to that of other conquests from the Continent, for the coming of the Goidels and Brythons. The second theory does not touch this point.

Professor Meyer is able to bring forward much tangible evidence in support of his theory, while that of Professor Rhys rests more upon conjecture.

Glancing back at our division of the similarities to be found in the tales we find that Professor Meyer's theory deals only with the second group, that of the more superficial resemblances. In the tale of the heated house in Branwen, which Professor Meyer equates with the Irish *Mesce Ulad*, we have an evident and natural interpolation. Professor Meyer's theory does not really explain

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the vast amount of correspondence between the fundamental *données* of the tales which form our first class of similarities.

An argument against the late borrowing of Irish legend by Welsh bards, which has hitherto been entirely overlooked may be drawn from an examination of the relations of the borrowed incidents to the whole mass of Irish literature. Let us assume that the Welshmen did borrow in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries: surely they would have borrowed those legends which were most popular with the Irish story-tellers. In that case we should find numerous adaptations of the great Ulster heroic cycle, whereas, save for a passing notice of Conchobar in *Kulhwch*, and one poem known as "*Marwnad Conroi mab Dairi*," having for its theme the enmity between Cuchulainn and Curoi, Welsh literature ignores the Ulster cycle entirely. On the other hand it presents a mass of analogues with the mythological cycle, that in which the Tuatha de Danann are the protagonists. Now, from the tenth century on, at least, the Irish had begun to euhemerise this cycle, and to present its characters as pre-Christian kings and warriors. Only one long example of a romantic treatment of the mythological cycle has survived in Irish, although a considerable number of story-skeletons have been preserved owing to their inclusion in biographical and topographical

works compiled by Irish antiquaries of the tenth and eleventh centuries. On the other hand we possess some fifty to sixty tales of the heroic cycle dating, in their present form, from this very period. These facts seem effectually to negative the proposition that Welsh mythic romance borrowed its substance and subject-matter from Ireland in the tenth-eleventh centuries. That style, mode of narration, colouring, and subsidiary incident may have been affected is quite another matter.

Both theories agree in believing that since there was a Goidelic population in Wales, since the Mabinogi appear to belong to the Goidelic regions of Wales, and since there is a great similarity between the Welsh and Irish tales, therefore the Mabinogi must be Goidelic in origin. Approaching the question from the more purely Welsh side we find ourselves met by many difficulties in the way of accepting this view. The tales are avowedly mythological: why should the Goidels only have had a mythology? Or, if the Brythons are allowed to have had a mythology at all, why should the Goidelic mythology alone have survived? Again, are we to suppose that the whole jealous bardic system of Wales existed for the sole purpose of retailing exotic Irish legends? We have already proved that a vast amount of legend similar to that of the Four Branches existed at one time. Was that, too, Goidelic in origin? If not,

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why should only a Goidelic literature have survived?

Is it possible then to formulate a theory that will offer fewer difficulties?

It is plain that Goidels and Brythons are closely-related branches of the Celtic stock; and of course the Celtic stock is itself but a branch of the Indo-European or Aryan family. Comparative Mythology and Folk-lore Study have demonstrated community of myth and legend between the most widely separated branches of the Aryan family, and this community is best explained by postulating the existence of primary Aryan myth-roots which the different branches of the Aryan race differentiated along their own lines. Applying this to the Celtic stock we find that the scission between Goidel and Brython is comparatively late in history and comparatively small when compared with those scissions that lie between the main branches of the Aryan family. There ought therefore to be no difficulty in supposing that the deeper community of legend, that indicated by our first class of similarities, depends upon the existence of an early Celtic mythology which Goidel and Brython shared in common.

The more superficial resemblances which we placed in our second group may possibly be but late borrowings, as Professor Meyer has argued with great force. Considering the close relation of

Goidel to Brython it would be surprising if they had not borrowed from one another at all.

We shall therefore treat the Four Branches of the Mabinogi as the degraded Brythonic development of early Celtic myth-roots, owing their deeper resemblances to Irish tales to original community of myth, and their more superficial resemblances to late influence from Irish sources.

The form of these tales is, as we have already stated, that of prose narrative. In three places do we find verses embedded in the prose. These verses, however, are not like the verses found in Irish prose tales, either a kind of lyric outburst or a recapitulation of the incidents told in prose, but are more of the runic or riddling nature of the fragments of doggerel to be found in certain nursery tales. Skene's idea that the tales are founded upon the poems of "Taliessin," &c., in the same way as the great French prose romances of the thirteenth-fifteenth century are prose redactions of the poems of Chrétien de Troyes and his imitators, is absurd, for the poems contain references only, often most obscure, to already existing tales, and in themselves make not the slightest attempt to tell any connected story.

Nor have we any reason for believing that the tales are founded upon poems which are now lost to us, for there is not a particle of evidence with which to oppose Professor Zimmer's conclusion that

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the Celts threw their narratives into prose while the Teutons preferred to cast theirs in poetic form.

We shall now approach the tales more closely, pointing out the features of note as we go along.

PWYLL, PRINCE OF DYFED

Pwyll, prince of Dyfed, goes a-hunting in Glyn Cuch. Separated from his men, he meets a pack of wondrous hounds following a stag, which they pull down before him in a little clearing in the wood. After admiring for a while the beauty of the dogs, whose coats are a shining white, and whose ears are a brilliant red, he drives them off, and calls on his own pack to the quarry. A grey rider on a grey steed rides up and rebukes Pwyll for this discourteous deed. Pwyll offers to make amends, and the offer is at once accepted. Pwyll and the grey stranger, who is Arawn, King of Annwn (Hades), are to exchange appearances, kingdoms, and duties. Pwyll is to fight a duel with Hafgan, the enemy of Arawn, a rival king in Annwn. Pwyll will overcome his opponent at the first onset, and he is on no account to strike Hafgan a second blow, for a second blow has the power of reviving the vanquished king, instead of putting an end to him. In a year's time Pwyll and Arawn are to meet again in Glyn Cuch to exchange shapes once more, and they separate to carry out the bargain.

Pwyll is taken for Arawn at the latter's court, sleeps innocently with Arawn's queen, and on the appointed day mortally wounds Hafgan, unites Annwn under his own headship, and returns to the trysting-place to meet Arawn. They take once more their own proper shapes, and return to their own courts, Arawn at once dis-

covers from his wife how true a friend he had in Pwyll, while Pwyll finds that Dyfed had never been so well ruled as during his year of absence. The two kings thereupon exchange valuable presents to re-affirm their friendship; and Pwyll, because he governed so well in Annwn, and because he united Annwn under one headship in one day, is ever afterwards known as Pwyll Pen Annwn (Pwyll, Head of Hades), laying aside his former title of Pwyll, Prince of Dyfed.

Although in its relationship to the other parts of the tale of Pwyll, this first part appears suspiciously like an explanation, ætiological or sophisticated in nature, of the origin of the appellation Head of Hades, there is no mistaking the mythological element to be found therein. The grey rider on a grey horse is avowedly a King in Hades, one of the darker powers, the possessor of the famous Cwn Annwn (the Dogs of Hades), whose memory has hardly yet died out of the folk-lore of remoter Wales. His friendship with Pwyll prepares the way for his friendship with the apparent culture-hero of South Wales, Pryderi, the son of Pwyll: a friendship which is implied in the tale of Math mab Mathonwy.

It seems as if the explanation why Pwyll was called Pen Annwn is weak and insufficient, and when we ask why such an explanation was rendered necessary at all we are driven to the conclusion that there must have been two Pwylls—one a historical or quasi-historical Prince of Dyfed, and

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the other a Pwyll who had always been considered as Pen Annwn, *i.e.*, a mythological character who had always been King of Hades. The writer of our story had evidently identified and confused the two characters.

As an instance of the degradation of the tale from a mythological point of view we may notice that Annwn, the Celtic Otherworld, which in the Irish tales is generally treated as across the sea or within a hill, is here looked upon as a mundane region—an ordinary province seemingly bordering upon Dyfed.

In the next part of the story, Pwyll, during a great feast at Arberth (the modern Narberth), walks out and seats himself upon a mound called Gorsedd Arberth. This mound has a magic "privilege": every one of high birth seating himself upon it is either soundly beaten or sees a marvel. A strange lady riding slowly towards them upon a white steed appears to Pwyll and his companions. He sends one of his men to meet her but she passes by, and cannot be overtaken on foot. She is pursued on horseback, but, without any apparent hastening, she defies pursuit. Next day she appears to them again at the same time and place, and a squire mounted on the fastest horse procurable follows her in vain. On the third day Pwyll himself gives chase, and on his praying her to stop, she graciously does so, Pwyll is fascinated by her beauty, while she, on her part admits that she has come to seek him for a husband. She is Rhiannon, the daughter of Heveidd Hên, and is sought in marriage by an unwelcome suitor, Gwawl fab Clud. She gives Pwyll a rendezvous a year

hence at her father's court, where the marriage feast will be prepared.

At the appointed time the feast is about to commence when a stranger appears and asks a boon. Pwyll promises to grant it, and the stranger (who is none other than Gwawl fab Clud) demands Rhiannon and the feast. Rhiannon, however, claims the feast for the retainers, and, telling Pwyll to grant the boon, shows him how to get the better of the unwelcome visitor. Rhiannon is to be given to Gwawl in a year's time, but on the day of the marriage Pwyll is to conceal a body of his men near the festal hall, and disguising himself in rags, is to enter and ask a boon of Gwawl. This boon is to be the filling of a magic bag, the gift of Rhiannon herself, with provisions; and this bag, no matter how much he put into it, will never get any fuller. On being questioned, Pwyll is to say that it will not be properly filled until a noble step in and press down its contents with his feet, saying, "Enough has been put in." Pwyll is to fasten the bag around Gwawl, whom Rhiannon engages to make enter the bag, and calling in his ambushed men is to dictate his own terms. Gwawl is satisfied with Pwyll's apparent compliance, and departs to his own country. Pwyll also returns to Dyfed.

At the end of the year the marriage feast is prepared for Gwawl. Rhiannon's cunning scheme works out perfectly: Gwawl is caught in the bag and beaten by Pwyll's men, and finally allowed to go on promising to seek no vengeance in the future. Pwyll and his bride return to Arberth with the blessing of Heveidd Hên, and they rule prosperously for two years.

This forms the second section of the tale, and we have here the legend which tells of the meeting

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of Pwyll with his wife Rhiannon. Seated on a wondrous mount Pwyll is sought by a supernatural bride. This looks exceedingly like the wooing of a mortal by a fairy bride; for we notice that in this part of the tale Pwyll is treated as a mere mortal credited with no supernatural powers or privileges, while the magic powers of Rhiannon show up in sharp contrast.

Rhiannon is a difficult character to identify mythologically. Professor Rhys was at first inclined to regard her as an embodiment of the dawn or dusk, but later connected her with the moon. She is the daughter of Heveidd Hên, and the appellation Hên, the Ancient, generally seems to refer in these stories to a dim mythological character appreciated as such to a certain extent by a writer who is evidently looking back upon the old order of things.

Since Gwawl fab Clud is an enemy of Pwyll's, and since Pwyll is one of the darker powers, Gwawl should be classed among the solar heroes. This section of the tale may therefore be interpreted as a representation of the struggle between the powers of light and darkness for the possession of the moon-bride.

At the end of two years Pwyll is still without an heir, and the nobles of the country utter their discontent, and ask Pwyll to take another wife. He demands, and is granted, a year's delay, and before the end of that

time a son is born, who is, however, spirited away while the six women watchers are asleep. They discover the loss before Rhiannon awakes, and killing a puppy, they lay its bones near her, and swear to the unhappy mother that she herself has slain her child. The rumour spreads, and Pwyll is asked to separate from his wife. This he indignantly refuses to do, and Rhiannon, as penance, has to sit at the outer gate of the court, tell her story to every comer, and offer to carry him into the court. Seldom does any one consent to be carried.

At this time Teyrnon Twrf Vliant, "the best man in the world," is lord of Gwent-is-Coed. Every night of the Calends of May a beautiful mare of his gives birth to a foal which immediately disappears. At the time of our story Teyrnon resolves to watch at the fateful hour, fully armed. A frightful noise is heard; a great claw is thrust in through the window and seizes the new-born foal. Teyrnon cuts the claw through at the joint, and rushes out; in the darkness there is nothing to be seen, and he only hears a terrible noise. Returning, he finds at the door a man-child wrapped in a fair mantle. He takes the child to his wife, and they rear him up under the name of Gwri Gwallt Euryn (Gwri of the Golden Hair). He grows apace—wondrously for his age—and at four years wants to drive the horses to water. He is given the horse born the night he was found.

Teyrnon and his wife now hear of the doings and happenings at the court of Pwyll; Teyrnon recognises in Gwri the lineaments of Pwyll, and, out of pity for Rhiannon, the couple agree to send Gwri to the court. Next day Teyrnon sets forth with his foster-son to the court, and, after seeing Rhiannon doing her penance, and of course refusing to be carried, both are heartily welcomed at the court. Teyrnon makes known his object, and the child is at once recognised as the

offspring of Pwyll. Pendaran Dyfed, to whom the child is afterwards given to rear, renames him Pryderi (Anxiety), from the first words uttered by Rhiannon on learning the truth. Teyrnon and his wife are promised great recompense, and the tale comes to a rapid close with a mention of the death of Pwyll, the consequent accession of Pryderi to the headship of Dyfed, and his marriage to Kicva.

It is only in this section that we come to the real kernel of the tale of Pwyll, namely the birth of Pryderi. Working backwards we can now surmise how the tale was put together. Firstly, we have the birth of Pryderi: then naturally follows the account of the meeting of his parents, and thirdly we have the explanation of his father's strange sobriquet, Pen Annwn. Not only is Pryderi the central character of the tale of Pwyll, but it is only through Pryderi that we connect together the Four Branches of the Mabinogi. This does not necessarily mean that the writers of the tales had any idea of securing the unity of the Four Branches in this manner.

From a mythological point of view Gwri Gwallt Euryn must be treated apart from Pryderi. His rapid growth and his golden hair are the characteristics of a solar hero, whilst Pryderi, friendly as he is with the powers of darkness, cannot be treated in the same way. There is probably here a fusion of different tales concerning opposed mythological characters whose opposition was not

noticed or understood by the compiler of the tales. This seems likely because there is no explanation given why Pryderi should have been found at the door of Teyrnnon's palace. It may very well be, as Professor Anwyl suggests, that one version of the tale made Teyrnnon the father of Pryderi. The names Teyrnnon and Rhiannon when reduced to their earlier Celtic equivalents, *Tigernonos* and *Rigantona* (i.e., King and Queen) form a pair, a circumstance which warrants Professor Anwyl's suggestion. It does not seem safe to follow these hypotheses too far when based upon slender evidence, as they are apt to lead to contradictions. "Doctors disagree" about Pryderi for instance: for Mr. Nutt suggests that Manawyddan was once credited with being the father of Pryderi. Arguing from Irish analogues to the tale there is substantial ground for the supposition, and in the giving of Rhiannon to Manawyddan to wife in the third tale of the series, we find, according to Mr. Nutt, a trace of the original version of the story.

BRANWEN DAUGHTER OF LLYR.

The tale of Branwen in itself does not follow directly from Pwyll, but is connected with that tale by the third in the series, Manawyddan. It is true that we do meet again with Pryderi, but he is barely mentioned, and when we attempt to

find the exact relationship between Pwyll and Branwen we are met by evident confusion, as may be seen at once on examining the references to Pendaran Dyfed in both tales.

Bran the Blessed, son of Llyr, is seated one day with his brother Manawyddan, his half-brothers Nissyen the peacemaker and Evnissyen the mischief-maker, on a rock above the sea at Harlech. Thirteen vessels draw near, one of which advancing, makes signs of peace, and in due time Matholwch, King of Ireland, is welcomed on shore as a suitor for the hand of Bran's sister, Branwen. The Irish King is at once accepted, and the marriage feast is held in tents at Aberffraw—in tents because no house large enough for Bran had ever been built. Next day Evnissyen, because his consent to his half-sister's marriage has not been asked, cuts off the lips, ears, tails and eyebrows of Matholwch's horses. Matholwch, surprised and outraged, takes to his ships, but returns on being assured that Bran knew nothing of the insult, and is willing to make ample amends in horses and gold. Bran, seeing that at the feast Matholwch still appears melancholy, supplements his other gifts by that of a magic cauldron which has the power of regenerating by the morrow any dead warrior thrown into it. Matholwch seems pleased. Next evening they fall to talking about the cauldron. Bran informs Matholwch that it was brought from Ireland by Llasar Llaesgyfnewid and his wife Kymideu Kymeinvoll when they escaped from the white-hot iron house in Ireland. Matholwch knows the rest of the history—how one day he was sitting by a lake when an enormous man came up, along with a woman twice as big as he, and bearing a cauldron on his back; how the woman was soon to give birth to a fully-armed warrior; how

these people (and their descendants evidently, although the tale does not state exactly how they multiplied) became a plague in the country : how they were imprisoned in an iron house which was made white hot : how the man and woman alone escaped, and evidently came to Britain, where, adds Bran, they have multiplied and become exceeding fine warriors.

This tale introduces us to new characters. We now meet the family of Llyr, whose fortunes, along with those of the family of Dôn and the family of Pwyll, make up, looked at from this point of view, the Four Branches of the Mabinogi.

Bendigeid Vran owes his appellation, not as a sophisticated Triad informs us, to the fact that he was one of the early Christianisers of the island, but in all probability to his being worshipped at some remote period. He was, seemingly, the tutelary deity of bardism and minstrelsy, and it is only in this light that we can succeed in making anything of the curious passage in the next section of the tale where he carries his musicians across to Ireland on his back.

The tale of the cauldron told during the feasting, which Professor Meyer equates with an incident in the *Mesce Ulad*, a tale of the Ulster heroic cycle, would very naturally be slipped in by the compiler knowingly as an Irish tale, told by an Irish visitor. It has no vital connection with the real tale of Branwen.

Magic cauldrons play a great part in Celtic

literature. The Tuatha De Danaan, possessed one: the poems in the Book of Taliessin, and the prose legend of Taliessin speak of them. One of the Spoils of Annwn, obtained by the Culture-hero seems to have been a magic cauldron, and poetry and inspiration seem to have their origin in a cauldron. Perhaps, as Professor Rhys suggests, this last idea is a relic of the days when the Aryan medicine-man intoxicated himself or worked himself into a state of ecstasy or trance by means of a sacred brewage.

Matholwch takes Bránwen to Ireland, and all goes well for a year. Suddenly the question of Evnissyen's outrage is revived, and Branwen is driven from the King's side to the kitchen, where she is struck every morning by the butcher. This goes on for three years unknown to any one in Britain, for all communication has been stopped by Matholwch's orders. Meanwhile Branwen rears a starling, who carries a letter to Bran. Leaving Britain to seven governors, Bran sets out for Ireland; his men are in ships, but he wades across himself, carrying his musicians on his back. (This passage is very obscure, and has probably suffered at the hands of a scribe.) To Matholwch's swineherds the fleet and the head of Bran appear like a wood and a mountain advancing: Branwen, however, knows and explains what they are. Matholwch and his men retreat across the Llinon (Shannon), which the Britons cross upon Bran's extended body. The Irish submit, but Bran seems unwilling to come to terms until he is won over by the Irish building for him a house big enough for him to enter, a thing never done before. This house is

to be a trap, for men are concealed in bags all round the pillars of the building. Evnisseyen, however, finds this out, and deliberately kills, one by one, all the hidden warriors. Peace is concluded in this hall, when suddenly Evnisseyen throws Branwen's child into the blazing fire. Tumult and massacre ensue. The Irish make use of the magic cauldron of regeneration until Evnisseyen, concealing himself among the Irish dead, is thrown in and bursts it, breaking his own heart in the effort. Seven Britons alone escape, along with Bran, who is wounded by a poisoned lance. He orders the seven to cut off his head and to take it to be buried in the White Hill in London, with the face towards France. On the journey, he tells them, they will be seven years feasting at Harlech, while the birds of Rhiannon will sing to them: at Gwales, in Pembroke they will rest eighty years, until one of them opens a door looking upon Cornwall. With Branwen and the head the seven set out for Britain. On landing in Anglesey, Branwen, thinking upon the misery she has brought to two countries, falls dead of a broken heart. The bearers of the head find that the seven governors have been killed, and they proceed with their journey. Everything turns out as Bran has foretold, and the head is buried in the White Hill at London.

The tale ends with an obvious appendix explaining how Ireland was re-peopled by the offspring of five pregnant women who were the sole remaining inhabitants of Ireland on Branwen's departure.

In this part of the tale Bran alters his mythological character. As a wonderful head, Professor Rhys compares him with the Janus of the Roman Pantheon, and with the Gallo-Roman Cernunnos.

These comparisons are suggestive, but in the last degree hypothetical.

The tale of Branwen as a whole is exceedingly interesting in presenting, as Mr. Nutt points out, remarkable analogies with the Teutonic tales of the Nibelung and Gudrun cycles. It differs in character from the three other tales of the series, for it seems to paint for us pictures of deliberate cruelty—that of the casting of the child into flames, that of Evnissyen's cruelty to the horses, and his cold-blooded way of killing the bagged Irish—which have no parallels in the other tales. Bloodshed there certainly is in Math, but it seems there to be mentioned with regret, while in Branwen, we seem to catch some of the ferocity and fierce lust of blood peculiar to the Teutonic saga.

When Evnissyen fell upon Matholwch's horses, "he cut off their lips at the teeth and their ears close to their heads, and their tails close to their backs: and where he could not lay hold of the eyebrows (here the exact meaning is not clear), he cut them to the bone: and so he disfigured the horses and rendered them useless."

When the two hundred Irish warriors were concealed in bags hanging on the pillars of the festal hall, Evnissyen entered "and scanned the house with fierce and savage looks, and descried the leathern bags which were around the pillars."

"What is in the bag?" asked he of one of the Irish. "Meal, good soul," said he. And Evnissyen felt about it until he came to the man's head, and he squeezed the head until he felt his fingers meet together in the brain through the bones. And he left that one and put his hand upon another, and asked what was therein? "Meal," said the Irishman. So he did the like unto every one of them until he had not left alive of all the two hundred save one only; and when he came to him, he asked what was there? "Meal, good soul," said the Irishman. And he felt about until he felt the head, and he squeezed that head as he had done the others. And albeit he found that the head of this one was armed, he left him not until he had killed him. And then he sang an *Englyn* :

There is in this bag a different sort of meal,
The ready combatant, when the assault is made
By his fellow warriors, prepared for battle.

When peace was being concluded in the hall, and Gwern the son of Branwen and Matholwch was being fondled by all, "Wherefore," said Evnissyen, "comes not my nephew the son of my sister unto me? Though he were not king of Ireland, yet willingly would I fondle the boy." "Cheerfully let him go to thee," said Bendigeid Vran: and the boy went unto him cheerfully. "By my confession to Heaven," said Evnissyen, "unthought

of by the household is the slaughter that I will this instant commit." Then he arose and took up the boy by the feet, and before any one could seize hold of him, he thrust the boy into the blazing fire. And when Branwen saw her son burning in the fire, she strove to leap into the fire also from the place where she sat between her two brothers. But Bendigeid Vran grasped her with one hand, and his shield with the other. Then they all hurried about the house, and never was there made so great a tumult by any host in one house as was made by them, as each man armed himself."

By dint of careful comparison with the various versions of the Teutonic legend, Mr. Nutt has succeeded in proving that the affinities of Branwen are with the more Northern forms, and when seeking to explain how a Welsh tale could be influenced by Northern Teutonic tales, we at once remember the fact, that both coasts of the Irish Sea were under the sway of the Danes and "Northmen" in the ninth and tenth centuries. Whether we accept the theory of the late Irish or of the more purely Welsh origin of the tales, the Danish influence could creep in equally well from Ireland or from Wales. It seems more natural, however, and is more in accordance with the hypothesis given above to take it as coming direct to the Welsh; for the Danes allied themselves with the

Welsh against the Saxons, and appear to have formed considerable permanent settlements around the Welsh coasts. In the peninsula of Gower, for instance, an astonishingly large number of the place-names are of Danish origin.

The Danes therefore may well have told their sagas to the Welsh, and thus the Danish influence crept into the tale of Branwen.

Of course, it is not intended for an instant to say that the tale of Branwen is of Danish origin. Branwen, like the three other tales, is a conglomeration of various elements, the form into which they were finally thrown being alone influenced by the tales of the Northmen. The final incident shows that the tale in its extant form was not put together before the late eleventh century, as the Irish legend which it repeats is an antiquarian invention probably not older than the early part of that century.

MANAWYDDAN, SON OF LLYR.

The next tale, Manawyddan, is a direct continuation of Branwen.

After burying the head of Bran, Manawyddan, one of the seven, turns to Pryderi, also one of the seven, and bewails the fact that he is now landless. Pryderi, however, gives Manawyddan his mother Rhiannon to wife, together with a portion of Dyfed, and for a while.

the four—Pryderi and Kicva and Manawyddan and Rhiannon—live very happily.

One evening they seat themselves upon Gorsedd Arberth. A thunderclap is heard, a thick mist arises which passes away to reveal the erstwhile smiling country utterly deserted and bare. They make the best of matters and live comfortably enough for two years, when provisions begin to run short. They now make for Lloegr, supporting themselves by making, first saddles, then shields, and then shoes, each time being driven away by the envy of the other makers of these articles. They eventually return to Arberth, and live for a month upon game. One morning the hunting dogs of Pryderi and Manawyddan follow a boar into a strange castle. In spite of the warning of Manawyddan Pryderi enters it too. There he sees a fountain, to which is chained a golden goblet. Seizing the goblet, his hands cling to it, while his feet are held to the marble slab on which he stands. Manawyddan returns to Arberth alone, and is reproached by Rhiannon, who seeks the castle, and suffers the same fate as Pryderi. A clap of thunder is heard, the castle and all within it disappear.

Kicva and Manawyddan are now left alone. Manawyddan swears to take no advantage of their position, and they set out to become shoemakers once more in Lloegr. Driven back to Dyfed by the jealousy of the other shoemakers, Manawyddan sows some wheat, which, when ripe, is carried away mysteriously. Watching the last of it, he finds that an army of mice, of which he captures one, are responsible for the theft. In spite of the entreaties of Kicva, he resolves to hang this mouse on Gorsedd Arberth, and while in the act of doing so a clerk rides up and endeavours to dissuade him in every way, even offering him much money for the animal. Manawyddan is not to be turned from his

purpose, and a priest who rides up later has no better success than the clerk. Finally, with a bishop, Manawyddan makes a bargain. He will release the mouse if the bishop will bring back Pryderi and Rhiannon, explain his interest in the mouse, restore everything to its former condition, and swear to seek no vengeance in the future. This is done. The mouse is the wife of the bishop, who is himself Llwyd Kil Coed, a friend of Gwal fab Clud, and the enchantment of Dyfed and the rape of Pryderi and Rhiannon are in revenge for the treatment of Gwawl by the father of Pryderi as told in the tale of Pwyll.

The tale ends with a phrase indicating the existence of a variant version, where greater prominence is evidently given to the doings of Pryderi and Rhiannon during the time of the enchantment.

In the tale of Manawyddan we have on the largest scale that peculiar element of magic which so charmed the world later in the Arthurian romances of France. Here we have a whole province depopulated and laid waste for years by enchantment, and the event is written of quite soberly, and treated as quite a matter of course, as, indeed, are all the other magical incidents of the tales.

Mythologically, Llwyd Kil Coed, although his name means the Grey One, appears as a friend of Gwawl fab Clud, a solar hero, as we have seen; Llwyd, therefore, is to be called a solar hero. Pryderi, the darker divinity, and Rhiannon, the moon-goddess, fall into his power. Manawyddan

—the Manannan mac Lir of Ireland, Lord of the Otherworld—is here shorn of all his magic attributes, and although he sets Pryderi and Rhiannon free, he seems to do so only by human foresight and cunning, and not by magic spells.

MATH, SON OF MATHONWY.

The tale of Math introduces us to the cycle of legends centring round the children of Dôn—the cycle which seems to have been either the greatest in extent or that which was most popular, for we find more references in the poetry to the characters of the story of Math than to those of any other of the Four Branches.

The plainest and most obvious reference to incidents in the Mabinogion occurs in connection with this tale. It is to be found in poem xvi. of the so-called Book of Taliessin. We give Mr. Skene's translation of it, and it will serve as a fair example of the style of the "Taliessin" poems.

The most skilful man ever heard of
Gwydyon ab Don, of toiling spirits,
Enchanted a woman from blossoms,
And brought pigs from the south.
Since he had no sheltering cots,
Rapid curves and plaited chains,
He made the forms of horses
From the springing
Plants, and illustrious saddles.

When are judged the chairs
 Excelling them will be mine ;
 My chair, my cauldron and my laws
 And my pervading eloquence meet for the chair.
 I am called skilful in the court of Dôn
 I and Euronwy and Euron.
 I saw a fierce conflict in Nant Ffrangcon
 On a Sunday at the time of dawn
 Between the bird of wrath and Gwydyon,
 Thursday certainly, they went to Mona
 To obtain whirlings and sorcerers.
 Arianrod, of laudable aspect, dawn of serenity,
 The greatest disgrace evidently on the side of the
 Brython.

It is easy to recognise the references to the incidents in Math, and it is equally easy to understand, even from the above instance, which is comparatively simple, why these poems, in the sections which are not explained by the tales, are called obscure.

Math, Head of Gwynedd, could only rest with his feet in a virgin's lap, and the virgin who performed this task was Goewin, the most beautiful girl of her time. Gilvaethwy, son of Dôn, confesses his love (under difficulties, for Math can hear every whisper that the wind reaches) for Goewin to his brother Gwydion, and the latter promises, in default of other means, to raise the South in order to get Math off to war and so enable Gilvaethwy to work his will. Gwydion then sets off for South Wales with the ostensible object of obtaining from Pryderi some new animals which the latter had evidently obtained from Annwn. These animals are pigs. Disguising themselves as bards, Gwydion and

his companions are well received at Pryderi's court, but are not successful in obtaining the desired animals as a boon. Finally they receive them in exchange for dogs and horses marvellously equipped, which Gwydion manufactures by enchantment. The tale now traces Gwydion's return journey northward, through all the places whose names are connected with pigs. The enchanted horses and dogs only keep their shape for a little while, and the army of Pryderi is soon in Gwynedd. Math marches out to meet the Southerners, and Gilvaethwy immediately takes the opportunity of having his will of Goewin. A terrible battle ensues in favour of the men of Gwynedd : a truce is agreed upon, but is broken by the victors, and finally a duel is arranged between Gwydion and Pryderi, in which the latter is slain chiefly through Gwydion's magic power. The people of the South seek their homes in sorrow.

On his return to his court Math discovers the treachery of Gilvaethwy and Gwydion. As a recompense to Goewin, Math takes her to wife, while he metes out a dreadful punishment to Gilvaethwy and Gwydion. For one year he transforms them into a couple of deer : for a second into a couple of pigs : for a third into a couple of wolves, and in each of these wild states they have issue, creatures turned into human beings later by the magic wand of Math. At the end of the third year the two brothers are allowed to return to their proper shapes.

Math now seeks another virgin foot-holder, and Arianrhod, daughter of Dôn, is suggested. Math, by aid of his magic powers, discovers that she is no virgin, and fleeing from the proof, she gives birth to two male children. One is Dylan Eil Ton (Dylan son of the Wave), who makes at once for the sea, and who is slain at some unknown time, by his uncle Govannon. The other, concealed and nurtured by Gwydion, grows

remarkably fast, and is taken by him to Arianrhod's castle. On being told who the child is, Arianrhod says he will never be named except by her. Gwydion, calling his magic powers again to his aid, obtains a ship and material for shoemaking, and seeks, disguised, along with the boy, the castle of Arianrhod. Dissatisfied with the intentionally ill-fitting shoes sent her by Gwydion, she comes herself to the ship, and seeing the boy strike a bird cleverly she says, "With a sure hand the lion hit the bird." Gwydion immediately declares that the boy has been named the Lion of the sure Hand (Llew Llaw Gyffes), and the enchanted articles suddenly vanish. Arianrhod now declares that the boy shall never be given arms, except by her. Gwydion again gets the better of Arianrhod by entering her castle disguised along with Llew and causing an enchanted hostile fleet to appear. In fear of attack Arianrhod and her maids arm Llew and Gwydion, whereupon the latter informs Arianrhod of what she has done, and the enchanted fleet disappears. This time the incensed Arianrhod declares that Llew shall never have a wife except of her bestowing. But Math and Gwydion fashion him a bride from flowers, and she is called Blodeuwedd. Math gives the couple broad lands in Gwynedd.

One day, during Llew's absence, Gronw Peifr, Lord of Penllyn, seeks hospitality of Blodeuwedd, and the pair conceive and enjoy a guilty love. Gronw induces Blodeuwedd to worm out of Llew the secret of the only way in which he can be killed. She finds that only a javelin, fashioned in a year's time, and worked upon solely during Sunday mass, can serve to wound him: besides, this javelin can only harm him when standing at the side of a bath on a river bank with one foot on the back of a buck and the other on the side of the bath. Gronw prepares the javelin, and when it is ready

Blodeuwedd persuades her spouse to show her exactly how the fatal blow would have to be dealt. Gronw, hidden behind a rock, casts the javelin at the right moment, and Llew, uttering a great cry, flies away in the guise of a bird. Gronw then enters into possession of Llew's lands.

Math and Gwydion are sorely grieved when the news of this reaches them, and Gwydion sets out to seek for Llew. Hearing of a sow in Arvon that every morning goes on a mysterious journey, Gwydion one day follows her, and is led to a place (called by a wrong derivation Nant-y-Llew) where an eagle sits dropping carrion from a tree. Gwydion sings some verses to the bird, which descends on his knee, and at a touch from his magic wand becomes a wasted Llew. In a year's time Llew has completely recovered, and marches out to take vengeance upon Gronw and his untrue wife. The latter flies before him, along with her maidens, who are all drowned in Llyn y Morwynion, and is finally turned by Gwydion, as a punishment for her sins, into an owl. To this day the owl is called Blodeuwedd. Gronw seeks to offer recompense to Llew, but the latter will hear of nothing except that Gronw shall allow a blow to be dealt him in the same way as he dealt the blow to Llew. After seeking in vain to find a substitute Gronw submits, but begs to be allowed to interpose a flat stone between him and the blow. In spite of the stone Llew's javelin is driven home: Gronw is killed, and to this day the pierced stone remains, and is known as Llech Gronw. Llew recovers his domains and governs happily, finally becoming Lord of Gwynedd.

The tale of Math, although not containing "magic" on quite so grand a scale as Manawyddan,

is yet more deeply saturated with it, for almost every incident in the tale turns upon magic. This is only to be expected at the court of Math, where the two greatest magicians known to Welsh legend, Math himself and Gwydion, are to be found.

Math, son of Mathonwy, is the greatest of all the mythological characters to be found in the Mabinogi. He is called by Professor Rhys the Celtic Zeus. His characteristics in the tale are justice and magnanimity. He is referred to in the poems, and given the epithet Hên, an epithet which we have noticed in the case of Heveidd as being applied to characters of the old mythology dimly perceived as such by the compilers of the tales.

Gwydion may be treated as a culture-hero introducing into his country valuable animals for the first time. Pigs appear, from various indications, to have been of great importance to the Welsh, and Gwydion is represented as gaining them by craft from Pryderi, who himself had obtained them from Annwn, whence all things of value to man are supposed ultimately to come.

We have already mentioned the identification of the children of Dôn with the Tuatha De Danaan. Llew Llaw Gyffes, a grandson of Dôn, is identified with the Irish Lug Laim-fada, Gyffes apparently meaning something more like "long" than "sure." The proper form of his name is not Llew, but

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Lleu. Lleu probably meant light, and is apparently the same root as we have in the Welsh words, *Goleu* and *Lleufer*, meaning light, and *Lleuad*, the moon. Lleu is an appropriate designation for the sun-god. His disappearance, caused by Gronw Pebr, is the temporary victory of the powers of darkness : his being brought back by Gwydion is no uncommon feat for the Culture-hero, whom, in this case, we have seen patronising the sun-god all through.

In commenting upon these tales mythological origin and significance have been assumed for them, and they have been interpreted in the terms of that struggle between light and darkness, which, however exaggerated an importance may have been given to it, undoubtedly supplies the motive for a large portion of our mythologies. It should, however, be noted that in Ireland the Tuatha de Danaan, whom we have equated with the races of Dôn and Llyr, appear rather as powers of life and increase generally than specifically as powers of light. In any case, too, it should be clearly understood that the Welsh tales, if mythological, are, as we have pointed out, "degraded" mythology. Myths originally independent seem to have become fused, and in the process to have altered their primitive character and import. Nor is it implied that the bardic story-telling class had any belief in

the stories as mythology, however tenaciously they, with the conservatism of the literary class in primitive communities, clung to the traditional framework and incidents. All idea of a bardic esoteric doctrine involving pre-Christian mythic philosophy must be utterly discarded. The bardic class in Wales, as in Ireland, was in so far pre-Christian, as, like the rest of their countrymen, Christianity had only affected them superficially. Their attachment to the old legends, though often undoubtedly frowned upon by the clerical class, is the natural attachment to old tribal tradition of the men who were, by training and calling, the appointed guardians and proclaimers of that tradition. Outside their professional interests, which in Wales, as in Ireland, never seem to have led to any serious conflict with the clergy, the bards were as good, or as bad Christians as their fellows.

But even if all mythological significance refused to the Mabinogion they have, apart from their intrinsic charm, an immense interest for the student of romantic literature. As we have seen, they almost certainly belong, in the present form, to a period antedating the year 1100. Now, they contain many story-themes, incidents, and scenes which figure in the great fairy-tale store common to all Europe, to a large part of Asia and to a portion of Africa. In especial they present most

marked points of contact with such portions of that fairy-tale store as have been recovered from the Gaelic-speaking peasants of Ireland and Scotland. It has been asserted, with a vigour generally in precise proportion with the assertor's ignorance of early Celtic literature, that the fairy tales collected orally in modern Gaeldom are comparatively late importations from the Continent, which in its turn received them comparatively late from the East. One valuable feature of early Welsh, as of early Irish literature is the exhibition of what may be called fairy-tale themes bound up with the earliest traditions of the race, and recorded at a date preceding the great contact of West with East in the late eleventh-thirteenth centuries, to which the introduction of so many romantic themes into Europe has been ascribed.

Finally, a word must be said as to the literary merit of these tales. They are admirable examples of story-telling; the main thread of incident is presented clearly and vigorously; there is no lack of picturesque description; the personages, when we consider their fairy-tale nature, are well differentiated and characterised; the whole atmosphere of illusion, glamour, and fantasy is admirably rendered. It would be hard to overmatch in its way the closing incident of *Manawyddan*, no matter what literature we turn to. This excellence of prose narrative is extremely remarkable in view of

the date, eleventh century, or at latest early twelfth century, to which we must assign the redaction of these tales in their extant form. There are no examples of either French, German, or English prose narrative of the period which we can adduce by way of comparison. Irish and Scandinavian literature alone offer parallels, and in the case of Scandinavia we cannot be sure how much of pre-twelfth century form is retained in what has come down to us. The mythological tales of Snorri's Edda, for instance—the most perfect examples of their style of story-telling in the whole range of literature—how far are their surpassing merits to be attributed to the Scandinavian story-tellers of the tenth and eleventh centuries? Or are they due to the literary genius of the thirteenth century Snorri? If we compare the two literatures as presumably of the same age, the comparison is by no means to the disadvantage of the Welsh. If the Mabinogion have not the realistic virility, the sober picturesqueness, the weight and import of the best examples of Scandinavian story-telling, they have an indefinable charm, a delicate precision of outline and colour, a special glamour of their own to which the others cannot pretend.

Comparison with Irish literature is even more interesting. The Irish tales are certainly older alike in component elements and in redaction, and they have most certainly exercised a marked

influence upon the Welsh ones. But Ireland has left us no examples of story-telling as perfect in their way as those of Wales. The conventions are far more rigid, far more strenuously adhered to and insisted upon. Thus the Irish tales have more of the accidental, the modishness of the time. In the one case we have stories, the full appeal of which can only be felt by men familiar with a very elaborate and artificial set of conventions; in others the universal story-loving instinct has scarcely any conventional obstacles of presentment to overcome. It may be noted that besides the strongly conventionalised form of narrative in which most of the Irish heroico-mythic sagas have come down to us, Ireland can also show a number of historic tales as straightforward and natural as the Welsh Mabinogion, with a vein of vigorous realism almost as marked as that of the Scandinavian saga tellers. But the official representatives of Irish literature, the court story-tellers, preferred the artificial conventionalised forms of narrative. This fact supplies another argument against the theory which would make the Mabinogion a mere imitative offshoot of Irish literature. If so, they could not have escaped the peculiarities of style and presentment which distinguish Irish story-telling as practised by its chief official representatives in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries.

Thus we may regard the Mabinogion as frag-

ments of the old mythic world of our British forefathers ; we may consider them simply as links in that chain of Celtic romance which stretches uninterruptedly from the court *file* or *ollamh* of sixth-century Ireland to the living peasant narrator of Connemara or Argyllshire ; or we may read them as delightful examples of fairy-tale telling. Whatever view we take of them, the more we know of them, the greater the interest they arouse, the more enduring the charm they exercise.

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

LADY CHARLOTTE GUEST'S edition of the *Mabinogion*, published in three volumes at Llandovery in 1849, still remains the only edition containing text and English translation, and is therefore the best edition for English readers. It likewise contains interesting notes which may still be consulted with advantage, although their standpoint is now somewhat antiquated. The translation alone, with a selection of the notes, may be had in one volume, roy. 8vo, 1879. The collection, edited and commented upon by Mr. Alfred Nutt, will shortly be included in Messrs. Dent's "Temple Classics." For those who intend making a serious study of the *Mabinogion*, M. Joseph Loth's French translation, 2 vols. 8vo, 1889, is indispensable. M. Loth's version is, on the whole, closer than that of Lady Guest, and in especial more faithful in the very few passages which Lady Guest omitted or softened for reasons of delicacy. M. Loth also provides a larger and more critically sifted mass of illustrative material in the Welsh genealogies and extracts from the chronicles (the so-called *Bruts*), the *Triads*, and the other Mediæval Welsh literature.

Professor Rhys and Mr. J. Gwenogfryn Evans have published a *diplomatic edition* of the Red Book text, Oxford, 1887, while reprints of the other manuscripts are just through the press. A *critical edition* of the *Mabinogion* has long been promised.

The *Four Branches of the Mabinogi* have been done into modern Welsh by Mr. J. M. Edwards, Wrexham, 1896.

For the mythological interpretation of the tales and the identification of Welsh and Irish characters, see Professor Rhys' *Hibbert Lectures*, London, 1888, and especially his *Studies in the Arthurian Legend*. In connection with these works it would also be well to read the other side of the whole question as contained in Mr. Andrew Lang's *Custom and Myth*, Longman's Silver Library, 1898. Compare, for instance, the chapter headed the *Myth of Cronus* with the last chapter of the *Hibbert Lectures*. Mr. Lang's article in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* on *Mythology* contains much general and historical information on the subject.

Mr. Alfred Nutt's Essay on the *Celtic Doctrine of Re-birth, &c.*, contained in Messrs. Meyer's and Nutt's *Voyage of Bran*, 2 vols., London, 1895-7, contains a wealth of material dealing with the interpretation of Celtic legend and its relation to the legends of other literatures. Ch. xiii. contains a comparison of the Manawyddan-Pwyll-Pryderi story with the North Irish Mongan Saga. The same author's study on *Branwen* in the *Folk-Lore Record* for 1882 deals with the question of the Teutonic element in Branwen, and in general with the historic conditions underlying the romantic presentment in the Mabinogi.

Professor Anwyl's articles on the *Four Branches of the Mabinogi* are now running in the *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*, i. 1, &c. In them, so far, Professor Anwyl has endeavoured to trace the original stories from the fragments of which the Mabinogi were pieced together.

Professor Meyer's theories in regard to the relationship between Goidel and Brython, as opposed to those of

Professor Rhys, are to be found in an article in the *Cymmrodor* for 1895-6.

The early Welsh poetry is only accessible to the English reader in the *Four Ancient Books of Wales*, edited and translated by Skene, 2 vols., Edinburgh, 1868. This is by no means a good critical work, and critical editions of the early poetry are badly wanted.

The Welsh text of some of the poetry is also contained in the *Myvyrian Archaeology*, London, 3 vols., 1801. This work also contains the *Bruts* and *Triads*. The *Rhys-Evans diplomatic edition of the Red Book*, that which contains the *Mabinogion*, also contains the *Bruts* and *Triads*.

Mr. G. J. Evans has edited a facsimile edition of the oldest Welsh MS., the Black Book of Carmarthen, dating from the last quarter of the twelfth century. This MS. contains the oldest text of the *Verses of the Graves*.

The dating of the poems to which we have referred has been done by M. Joseph Loth in an article in the *Révue Celtique* for January, 1900, and in the second volume of his *Métrie galloise*. His forthcoming edition of the *Black Book of Carmarthen* will no doubt contain new and fruitful contributions to the same end.

The Irish section of the *Cours de la littérature celtique* of M. D'Arbois de Jubainville—I. *Introduction*. II. *Le cycle mythologique irlandais*. V. *L'épopée celtique en Irlande*. VI. *La civilisation des Celtes et la civilisation homérique*. VII. and VIII. *Etudes sur le droit celtique*—forms a library of Irish antiquities (literary history, mythology, social and legal organisation) of great value to the student.

Professor Rhys' *Celtic Folk-lore, Welsh and Manx*, 2 vols., Oxford, 1901, contains much valuable matter on the *Mabinogion* from a folk-lore point of view.

The only attempt at a hand-book of Welsh literature is Stephens' *Literature of the Kymry*, 1876, a work which is no guide at all for the early periods. There is also a short summary chapter in Professor Rhys' and Mr. Brynmôr Jones' *Welsh People*, London, 1899. But practically it may be said that the problems of Welsh literary history from the tenth to the thirteenth century have not been seriously grappled with. A beginning has been made with the indispensable ground-work, the critical editing of the text. Until that is accomplished, and until such studies as M. Loth's upon the metrics, of Mr. Evans upon palæography, and of Professor Zimmer and other German scholars upon the linguistic features of mediæval Welsh literature have been completed and tested, it is impossible to do more than offer tentative expositions and interpretations. There is plenty of work for young Welsh scholars in the critical examination of the considerable, interesting, and often delightful literature produced in Wales during the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries.

CHRÉTIEN DE TROYES (page 3).

See No. 4 of this series : King Arthur and his Knights.

SPREAD OF THE ARTHUR LEGEND (page 5).

See No. 1 of this series : Celtic and Mediæval Romance.

TUATHA DE DANAAIN (page 12).

For a full discussion of the nature of these beings *see* ch. xvii. of the *Voyage of Bran*, and No. 8 of this series : The Fairy Mythology of Shakespeare.

MESCE ULAD (page 13).

This tale relates an incursion of the Ulster warriors in a fit of drunken frenzy into Connaught. They are assigned an iron house for the night, and the

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Connaught men endeavour to roast them in it. A similar incident occurs in the tale known as the *Destruction of Dindrig*, the personages of which are assigned to the fifth century B.C. In the first case the device fails ; in the second it succeeds.

MYTHOLOGICAL IRISH CYCLE (page 16).

The reference is to the story entitled *The Second Battle of Moytura*, edited and translated by Dr. Whitley Stokes, *Révue Celtique*, vol. xii. 1895.

RESEMBLANCES OF IRISH-WELSH ROMANCES (page 18).

The more superficial resemblances alluded to in the text are more marked in stories like *Kulhwch* or the *Dream of Rhonabwy* than in the Four Branches of the Mabinogi. The enumerative method, the triadic groupings which are such striking features in *Kulhwch* are equally striking in sagas like *Bruden da Derga* (now being edited and translated by Dr. Whitley Stokes in the *Révue Celtique*), or *Mesce Ulad* (edited and translated by the late W. M. Henessey, Todd Lectures, vol. i.).

ANNWN (HADES) (page 21).

For the whole question of the Otherworld in Celtic Myth see the first volume of the *Voyage of Bran*.

MAGIC CAULDRONS (page 29).

See Professor Rhys' *Studies in the Arthurian Legend* and Mr. Nutt's *Legend of the Holy Grail*.

ESOTERIC BARDISM (page 45).

The nonsense talked upon the subject is largely due to the uncritical inventions of pseudo-antiquaries of the 16th to 17th and 18th centuries, uncritical inventions which

occupy much the same plane of conception as the Rosicrucian and Free Masonic fancies of the 17th and 18th century.

FAIRY TALE TRACES IN THE MABINOGION.

These are fully enumerated and discussed in vol. iv. of J. F. Campbell's *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*.

THE CONVENTIONAL ELEMENT IN IRISH STORY-TELLING (page 48).

For an admirable example of the *genre* see the already cited *Bruden du Derga* : for an example of the shocking depths to which it descended when the conventions had been worn to death, see the twelfth century *Battle of Magh Rath*, edited and translated by O'Donovan, Dublin, 1852.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Some explanation is needed of the form of spelling I have adopted in transcribing Norse proper names. The spirants þ and ð are represented by th and d, as being more familiar to readers unacquainted with the original. Marks of vowel-length are in all cases omitted. The inflexional -r of the nominative singular masculine is also omitted, whether it appears as -r or is assimilated to a preceding consonant (as in Odinn, Eysteinn, Heindall, Egill) in the Norse form, with the single exception of the name Tyr, where I use the form which has become conventional in English.

MANCHESTER,

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THE EDDA :

I. THE DIVINE MYTHOLOGY OF THE NORTH

THE Icelandic Eddas are the only vernacular record of Germanic heathendom as it developed during the four centuries which in England saw the destruction of nearly all traces of the heathen system. The so-called Elder Edda is a collection of some thirty poems, mythic and heroic in substance, interspersed with short pieces of prose, which survives in a thirteenth-century MS., known as the Codex Regius, discovered in Iceland in 1642; to these are added other poems of similar character from other sources. The Younger Edda is a prose paraphrase of, and commentary on, these poems and others which are lost, together with a treatise on metre, written by the historian Snorri Sturluson about 1220.

This use of the word Edda is incorrect and unhistorical, though convenient and sanctioned by the use of several centuries. It was early used as a general term for the rules and materials for versemaking, and applied in this sense to Snorri's

work. When the poems on which his paraphrase is founded were discovered, Icelandic scholars by a misunderstanding applied the name to them also; and as they attributed the collection quite arbitrarily to the historian Saemund (1056-1133), it was long known as Saemundar Edda, a name now generally discarded in favour of the less misleading titles of Elder or Poetic Edda. From its application to this collection, the word derives a more extended use, (1) as a general term for Norse mythology; (2) as a convenient name to distinguish the simpler style of these anonymous narrative poems from the elaborate formality of the Skalds.

The poems of the Edda are certainly older than the MS., although the old opinion as to their high antiquity is untenable. The majority probably date from the tenth century in their present form; this dating does not necessitate the ascription of the shape in which the legends are presented, still less of their substance, to that period. With regard to the place of their composition opinions vary widely, Norway, the British Isles and Greenland having all found champions; but the evidence is rather questionable, and I incline to leave them to the country which has preserved them. They are possibly of popular origin; this, together with their epic or narrative character, would account for the striking absence from them of some of the chief characteristics of Skaldic poetry: the obscuring of

the sense by the elaborate interlacing of sentences and the extensive use of kennings or mythological synonyms, and the complication of the metre by such expedients as the conjunction of end-rhyme with alliteration. Eddic verse is governed solely by the latter, and the strophic arrangement is simple, only two forms occurring : (1) couplets of alliterative short lines ; (2) six-line strophes, consisting of a couplet followed by a single short line, the whole repeated.

Roughly speaking, the first two-fifths of the MS. is mythological, the rest heroic. I propose to observe this distinction, and to deal in this study with the stories of the Gods. In this connexion, Snorri's Edda and the mythical Ynglinga Saga may also be considered, but as both were compiled a couple of centuries or more after the introduction of Christianity into Iceland, it is uncertain how much in them is literary explanation of tradition whose meaning was forgotten ; some also, especially in Snorri, is probably pure invention, fairy tale rather than myth.

Many attempts have been made to prove that the material of the Edda is largely borrowed. The strength and distinction of Icelandic poetry rest rather on the fact that it is original and national and, like that of Greece, owes little to foreign sources ; and that it began in the heathen age, before Christian or Romantic influences had touched Iceland. Valuable as the early Christian poetry

of England is, we look in vain there for the humour, the large-minded simplicity of motive, the suggestive character-drawing, the swift dramatic action, which are as conspicuous in many poems in the Edda as in many of the Sagas.

Omitting the heroic poems, there are in Codex Regius the following: (1) Of a more or less comprehensive character, *Völuspa*, *Vafthrudnismal*, *Grimnismal*, *Lokasenna*, *Harbardsljod*; (2) dealing with episodes, *Hymiskvida*, *Thrymskvida*, *Skirnisför*. *Havamal* is a collection of proverbs, but contains two interpolations from mythical poems; *Alvismal*, which, in the form of a dialogue between Thor and a dwarf Alviss, gives a list of synonyms, is a kind of mythologico-poetical glossary. Several of these poems are found in another thirteenth-century vellum fragment, with an additional one, variously styled *Vegtamskvida* or *Baldr's Dreams*; the great fourteenth-century codex Flateybook contains *Hyndluljod*, partly genealogical, partly an imitation of *Völuspa*; and one of the MSS. of Snorri's Edda gives us *Rigsthula*.

Völuspa, though not one of the earliest poems, forms an appropriate opening. Metrical considerations forbid an earlier date than the first quarter of the eleventh century, and the last few lines are still later. The material is, however, older: the poem is an outline, in allusions often obscure to us, of traditions and beliefs familiar to its first hearers.

The very bareness of the outline is sufficient proof that the material is not new. The framework is apparently imitated from that of the poem known as *Baldr's Dreams*, some lines from which are inserted in *Völuspa*. This older poem describes Odin's visit to the Sibyl in hell-gates to inquire into the future. He rides down to her tomb at the eastern door of Nifl-hell and chants spells, until she awakes and asks: "What man unknown to me is that, who has troubled me with this weary journey? Snow has snowed on me, rain has beaten me, dew has drenched me, I have long been dead." He gives the name Wegtam, or Way-wise, and then follow question and answer until she discovers his identity and will say no more. In *Völuspa* there is no descriptive introduction, and no dialogue; the whole is spoken by the Sibyl, who plunges at once into her story, with only the explanatory words: "Thou, Valfather, wouldst have me tell the ancient histories of men as far as I remember." She describes the creation of the world and sky by Bor's sons; the building by the Gods of a citadel in Ida-plain, and their age of innocence till three giant-maids brought greed of gold; the creation of the dwarfs; the creation of the first man and woman out of two trees by Odin, Hoeni and Lodur; the world-ash and the spring beside it where dwell the three Norns who order the fates of men. Then follows an allusion to the

war between the Aesir and the Vanir, the battle with the giants who had got possession of the goddess Freyja, and the breaking of bargains; an obscure reference to Mimi's spring where Odin left his eye as a pledge; and an enumeration of his war-maids or Valkyries. Turning to the future, the Sibyl prophesies the death of Baldr, the vengeance on his slayer, and the chaining of Loki, the doom of the Gods and the destruction of the world at the coming of the fire-giants and the release of Loki's children from captivity. The rest of the poem seems to be later; it tells how the earth shall rise again from the deep, and the Aesir dwell once more in Odin's halls, and there is a suggestion of Christian influence in it which is absent from the earlier part.

Of the other general poems, the next four were probably composed before 950; in each the setting is different. *Vafthrudnismal*, a riddle-poem, shows Odin in a favourite position, seeking in disguise for knowledge of the future. Under the name of Gǫngrad (Wanderer), he visits the wise giant Vafthrudni, and the two agree to test their wisdom: the one who fails to answer a question is to forfeit his head. In each case the questions deal first with the past. Vafthrudni asks about Day and Night, and the river which divides the Giants from the Gods, matters of common knowledge; and then puts a question as to the future: "What is the

plain where Surt and the blessed Gods shall meet in battle?" Odin replies, and proceeds to question in his turn; first about the creation of Earth and Sky, the origin of Sun and Moon, Winter and Summer, the Giants and the Winds; the coming of Njörd the Wane to the Aesir as a hostage; the Einherjar, or chosen warriors of Valhalla. Then come prophetic questions on the destruction of the Sun by the wolf Fenri, the Gods who shall rule in the new world after Ragnarök, the end of Odin. The poem is brought to a close by Odin's putting the question which only himself can answer: "What did Odin say in his son's ear before he mounted the pyre?" and the giant's head is forfeit.

In the third poem of this class, *Grimnismál*, a prose introduction relates that Odin and Frigg quarrelled over the merits of their respective foster-children. To settle the question, Odin goes disguised as Grimni, "the Hooded One," to visit his foster-son Geirröd; but Frigg, to justify her charge of inhospitality against Geirröd, sends her maiden Fulla to warn him against the coming stranger. Odin therefore meets with a harsh reception, and is bound between two fires in the hall. Geirröd's young son, Agnar, protests against this rude treatment, and gives wine to the guest, who then begins to instruct him in matters concerning the Gods. He names the halls of the Aesir, describes Valhalla and the ash Yggdrasil, the

Valkyries, the creation of the world (two stanzas in common with *Vafthrudnismal*), and enumerates his own names. The poem ends with impressive abruptness by his turning to Geirröd :

“Thou art drunk, Geirröd, thou hast drunk too deep ; thou art bereft of much since thou hast lost my favour, the favour of Odin and all the Einherjar. I have told thee much, but thou hast minded little. Thy friends betray thee : I see my friend’s sword lie drenched in blood. Now shall Odin have the sword-weary slain ; I know thy life is ended, the Fates are ungracious. Now thou canst see Odin : come near me, if thou canst.”

[Prose.] “King Geirröd sat with his sword on his knee, half drawn. When he heard that Odin was there, he stood up and would have led Odin from the fires. The sword slipped from his hand ; the hilt turned downwards. The king caught his foot and fell forwards, the sword standing towards him, and so he met his death. Then Odin went away, and Agnar was king there long afterwards.”

Harbardsljod is a dialogue, and humorous. Thor on his return from the east comes to a channel, at the farther side of which stands Odin, disguised as a ferryman, Greybeard. He refuses to ferry Thor across, and they question each other as to their past feats, with occasional threats from Thor and taunts from Odin, until the former goes off vowing vengeance on the ferryman :

THOR. “Thy skill in words would serve thee ill if I waded across the water ; I think thou wouldst cry

louder than the wolf, if thou shouldst get a blow from the hammer."

ODIN. "Sif has a lover at home, thou shouldst seek him. That is a task for thee to try, it is more proper for thee."

THOR. "Thou speakest what thou knowest most displeasing to me; thou cowardly fellow, I think that thou liest."

ODIN. "I think I speak true; thou art slow on the road. Thou wouldst have got far, if thou hadst started at dawn."

THOR. "Harbard, scoundrel, it is rather thou who hast delayed me."

ODIN. "I never thought a shepherd could so delay Asa-Thor's journey."

THOR. "I will counsel thee: row thy boat hither. Let us cease quarrelling; come and meet Magni's father."

ODIN. "Leave thou the river; crossing shall be refused thee."

THOR. "Show me the way, since thou wilt not ferry me."

ODIN. "That is a small thing to refuse. It is a long way to go: a while to the stock, and another to the stone, then keep to the left hand till thou reach Verland. There will Fjörgyn meet her son Thor, and she will tell him the highway to Odin's land."

THOR. "Shall I get there to-day?"

ODIN. "With toil and trouble thou wilt get there about sunrise, as I think."

THOR. "Our talk shall be short, since thou answerest with mockery. I will reward thee for refusing passage, if we two meet again."

ODIN. "Go thy way, where all the fiends may take thee."

Lokasenna also is in dialogue form. A prose introduction tells how the giant Oegi, or Gymi, gave a feast to the Aesir. Loki was turned out for killing a servant, but presently returned and began to revile the Gods and Goddesses, each one in turn trying to interfere, only to provoke a taunt from Loki. At last Thor, who had been absent on a journey, came in and threatened the slanderer with his hammer, whereupon Loki said, "I spoke to the Aesir and the sons of the Aesir what my mind told me; but for thee alone I will go away, for I know thou wilt strike." Some of the poem is rather pointless abuse, but much touches points already suggested in the other poems.

Hyndluljóð is much later than the others, probably not before 1200. The style is late, and the form imitated from *Völuspá*. It describes a visit paid by Freyja to the Sibyl to learn the genealogy of her favourite Ottar. The larger part deals with heroic genealogies, but there are scanty allusions to Baldr, Frey, Heimdal, Loki's children, and Thor, and a Christian reference to a God who shall come after Ragnarök "when Odin shall meet the wolf." It tells nothing new.

We have here then, omitting *Hyndluljóð*, five poems (four of them belonging to the first half of the tenth century) which suggest a general outline of Norse mythology: there is a hierarchy of Gods, the Aesir, who live together in a citadel, Odin

being the chief. Among them are several who are not Aesir by origin: Njörd and his son and daughter, Frey and Freyja, are Vanir; Loki is really an enemy and an agent in their fall; and there are one or two Goddesses of giant race. The giants are rivals and enemies to the Gods; the dwarfs are also antagonistic, but in bondage. The meeting-place of the Gods is by the World-Ash, Yggdrasil, on whose well-being the fate of Gods and men depends; at its root lies the World-Snake. The Gods have foreknowledge of their own doom, Ragnarök, the great fight when they shall meet Loki's children, the Wolf and the Snake; both sides will fall and the world be destroyed. An episode in the story is the death of Baldr. This we may assume to be the religion of the Viking age (800-1000 A.D.), a compound of the beliefs of various ages and tribes.

The Aesir.—The number of the Aesir is not fixed. *Hyndluljóð* says there were twelve ("there were eleven Aesir when Baldr went down into the howe"). Snorri gives a list of fourteen Aesir or Gods (Odin, Thor, Baldr, Njörd, Frey, Tyr, Bragi, Heimdal, Höd, Vidar, Vali, Ullr, Forseti, Loki), and adds Hoeni in another list, all the fifteen occurring in the poems; and sixteen Goddesses (Asynjor), the majority of whom are merely personified epithets, occurring nowhere else. Of the sixteen, Frigg, Gefion, Freyja and Saga (really an

epithet only) are Goddesses in the poems, and Fulla is Frigg's handmaid. In another chapter, Snorri adds Idunn, Gerd, Sigyn and Nanna, of whom the latter does not appear in the Elder Edda, where Idunn, Gerd (a giantess) and Sigyn are the wives of Bragi, Frey and Loki; and two others, the giantess Skadi and Sif, are the wives of Njörd and Thor.

A striking difference from classical mythology is that neither Tyr (who should etymologically be the Sky-god), nor Thor (the Thunder-god), takes the highest place. Tyr is the hero of one important episode, the chaining of the Wolf, through which he loses his right hand. This is told in full by Snorri and alluded to in *Lokasenna*, both in the prose preface ("Tyr also was there, with only one hand; the Fenris-wolf had bitten off the other, when he was bound") and in the poem itself:

LOKI. "I must remember that right hand which Fenri bit off thee."

TYR. "I am short of a hand, but thou of the famous wolf; to each the loss is ill-luck. Nor is the wolf in better plight, for he must wait in bonds till Ragnarök."

Otherwise, he only appears in connexion with two more popular Gods: he speaks in Frey's defence in *Lokasenna*, and in *Hymiskvida* he is Thor's companion in the search for a cauldron; the latter poem represents him as a giant's son.

Thor, on the other hand, is second only to his

father Odin; he is the strongest of the Gods and their champion against the giants, and his antagonist at Ragnarök is to be the World-Snake. Like Odin, he travels much, but while the chief God generally goes craftily and in disguise, to gain knowledge or test his wisdom, Thor's errands are warlike; in *Lokasenna* he is absent on a journey, in *Harbardsljod* and *Alvissmal* he is returning from one. His journeys are always to the east; so in *Harbardsljod*: "I was in the east, fighting the malevolent giant-brides. . . . I was in the east and guarding the river, when Svarang's sons attacked me." The Giants live in the east (*Hymiskvida* 5); Thor threatened Loki: "I will fling thee up into the east, and no one shall see thee more" (*Lokasenna* 59); the fire-giants at Ragnarök are to come from the east: "Hrym comes driving from the east, he lifts his shield before him. . . . A ship comes from the east, Muspell's sons will come sailing over the sea, and Loki steers" (*Völuspá* 50, 51). It would not, perhaps, be overstraining the point to suggest that this is a reminiscence of early warfare between the Scandinavians and eastern nations, either Lapps and Finns or Slavonic tribes.

Thor is the God of natural force, the son of Earth. Two of the episodical poems deal with his contests with the giants. *Thrymskvida*, the story of how Thor won back his hammer, Mjöllni, from the giant Thrym, is the finest and one of the oldest

of the mythological poems; a translation is given in the appendix, as an example of Eddic poetry at its best. Loki appears as the willing helper of the Gods, and Thor's companion. The Thunderer's journey with Tyr in quest of a cauldron is related with much humour in *Hymiskvida*: Hymi's beautiful wife, who helps her guests to outwit her husband, is a figure familiar in fairy-tales as the Ogre's wife.

The chief God of the Scandinavians is, it must be confessed, an unsympathetic character. He is the head of the Valhalla system; he is Val-father (Father of the Slain), and the Valkyries are his "Wishmaidens," as the Einherjar are his "Wishsons." He naturally takes a special interest in mortal heroes, from whom come the chosen hosts of Valhalla. But, in spite of the splendour of his surroundings, he is wanting in dignity. The chief of the Gods has neither the might and unthinking valour of Thor, nor the self-sacrificing courage of Tyr. He is a God who practises magic, and it is as Father of Spells that he is powerful. He is the wisest of the Gods in the sense that he remembers most about the past and foresees most about the future; yet he is powerless in difficulty without the craft of Loki and the hammer of Thor. He always wanders in disguise, and the stories told of him are chiefly love-adventures; this is true of all the deeds he mentions in *Harbardsljod*, and also of

the two interpolations in *Havamal*, though one of the two had an object, the stealing of the mead of inspiration from the giant Suptung, whose daughter Gunnlöd guarded it.

Völuspa makes him one of three creative deities, the other two being Lodur (probably Loki) and Hoeni, of whom nothing else is known except the story that he was given as hostage to the Vanir in exchange for Njörd. The same three Gods (Odin, Loki and Hoeni) are connected with the legend of the Nibelung treasure; and it was another adventure of theirs, according to Snorri, which led to the loss of Idunn.

Of the other Gods, Bragi is a later development; his name means simply king or chief, and his attributes, as God of eloquence and poetry, are apparently borrowed from Odin. Heimdal, the watchman and "far-seeing like the Vanir," who keeps guard on the rainbow bridge Bifröst, is represented in the curious poem *Rigsthula* as founder of the different social orders. He wandered over the world under the name of Rig, and from his first journey sprang the race of thralls, swarthy, crooked and broad-backed, who busied themselves with fencing land and tending goats and swine; from his second, the churls, fine and ruddy, who broke oxen, built houses and ploughed the land; from his third, the earls, yellow-haired, rosy, and keen-eyed, who broke horses and strung bows,

rode, swam, and hurled spears; and the youngest of the earls' race was Konung the king, who knew all mysteries, understood the speech of birds, could quench fire and heal wounds. Heimdal is said to be the son of nine mothers, and to have fought with Loki for Freyja's Brising-necklace. His horn is hidden under Yggdrasil, to be brought out at Ragnarök, when he will blow a warning blast. His origin is obscure. Still less is known of Vidar and Vali, two sons of Odin, one of whom is to avenge Baldr's death, the other to slay the wolf after it has swallowed up the chief God at Ragnarök. Thor's stepson Ullr (Glory) is probably, like his sons Modi and Magni (Wrath and Strength), a mere epithet.

Frigg, Odin's wife and the chief Goddess, daughter of Earth, is not very distinctly characterised, and is often confused with Freyja. Gefion should be the sea-goddess, since that seems to be the meaning of her name, but her functions are apparently usurped by the Wane Njörd; according to Snorri, she is the patron of those who die unwedded.

Baldr.—The story of Baldr is the most debated point in the Edda. The chief theories advanced are: (1) That it is the oldest part of Norse mythology, and of ritual origin; (2) that Baldr is really a hero transformed into a God; (3) that the legend

is a solar myth with or without Christian colouring; (4) that it is entirely borrowed from Mediæval Greek and Christian sources. This last theory is too ingenious to be credible; and with regard to the third, there is nothing essentially Christian in the chief features of the legend, while the solar idea leaves too much unexplained. The references to the myth in the Elder Edda are:

(1) *Vegtamskvida* (about 900 A.D.). Odin questions the Sibyl as to the meaning of Baldr's dreams:

ODIN. "For whom are the benches (in hell) strewn with rings, the halls fairly adorned with gold?"

SIBYL. "Here the mead, clear drink, stands brewed for Baldr; the shields are spread. The sons of the Aesir are too merry."

ODIN. "Who will be Baldr's slayer and rob Odin's son of life?"

SIBYL. "Höd bears thither the high branch of fame: he will be Baldr's slayer and rob Odin's son of life."

ODIN. "Who will avenge the deed on Höd and bring Baldr's slayer to the funeral pyre?"

SIBYL. "Rind bears a son, Vali, in the halls of the west. He shall not wash his hands nor comb his hair till he bears Baldr's foe to the pyre."

(2) In *Lokasenna* Frigg says: "If I had a son like Baldr here in Oegi's halls, thou shouldst not pass out from the sons of the Aesir, but be slain here in thy anger"; to which Loki replies, "Wilt thou that I speak more ill words, Frigg? I am

the cause that thou wilt never more see Baldr ride into the hall."

(3) In *Vafthrudnismal* the only reference is Odin's question, "What said Odin in his son's ear when he mounted the pyre?"

(4) In *Völuspá* the Sibyl prophesies, "I saw doom threatening Baldr, the bleeding victim, the son of Odin. Grown high above the meadows stood the mistletoe, slender and fair. From this stem, which looked so slender, grew a fatal and dangerous shaft. Höd shot it, and Frigg wept in Fenhall over Valhall's woe." The following lines, on the chaining of Loki, suggest his complicity.

(5) *Hyndluljóð* has one reference: "There were eleven Aesir by number when Baldr went down into the howe. Vali was his avenger and slew his brother's slayer."

Besides these there is a fragment quoted by Snorri: "Thökk will weep dry tears at Baldr's funeral pyre. † I had no good of the old man's son alive or dead; let Hel keep what she has." *Grimnismal* assigns a hall to Baldr among the Gods.

There are, in addition, two prose versions of the story by later writers: the Icelandic version of Snorri (1178-1241) with all the details familiar to every one; and the Latin one of the Dane Saxo Grammaticus (about thirty years earlier), which makes Baldr and Höd heroes instead of Gods, and

completely alters the character of the legend by making a rivalry for Nanna's favour the centre of the plot and cause of the catastrophe. On the Eddic version and on Saxo's depend the theories of Golther, Detter, Niedner and other German scholars on the one hand, and Dr. Frazer on the other.

It has often been pointed out that there is no trace of Baldr-worship in other Germanic nations, nor in any of the Icelandic sagas except the late *Frithjofssaga*. This, however, is true of other Gods, notably of Tyr, who is without question one of the oldest. The only deities named with any suggestion of sacrifice or worship in the Icelandic sagas proper are Odin, Thor, Frey, Njörd, Frigg and Freyja. The process of choice is as arbitrary in mythology as in other sciences. Again, it is more likely that the original version of the legend should have survived in Iceland than in Denmark, which, being on the mainland, was earlier subject to Christian and Romantic influences; and that a heathen God should, in the two or three centuries following the establishment of Christianity in the North, be turned into a mortal hero, than that the reverse process should have acted at a sufficiently late date to permit of both versions existing side by side in the thirteenth century. A similar gradual elimination of the supernatural may be found in the history of the Volsung myth. Snorri's version is merely an amplification of that in the Elder

Edda, which, scanty as its account of Baldr is, leaves no doubt as to his divinity.

The outline gathered from the poems is as follows : Baldr, Odin's son, is killed by his brother Höd through a mistletoe spray ; Loki is in some way concerned in his death, which is an overwhelming misfortune to the Gods ; but it is on Höd that his death is avenged. He is burnt on a pyre (Snorri says on his ship, a feature which must come from the Viking age ; *Hyndluljóð* substitutes howe-burial). He will be absent from the great fight at Ragnarök, but *Völuspá* adds that he will return afterwards. Nanna has nothing to do with the story. The connexion with the hierarchy of the Aesir seems external only, since Baldr has no apparent relation to the great catastrophe as have Odin, Thor, Frey, Tyr and Loki ; this, then, would point to the independence of his myth.

The genuineness of the myth seems to depend on whether the mistletoe is an original feature of it or not, and on this point there can be little real doubt. The German theory that Baldr could only be killed by his own sword, which was therefore disguised by enchantment and used against him, and that the Icelandic writers misunderstood this to mean a mistletoe sprig, is far-fetched and romantic, and crumbles at a touch. For if, as it is claimed, the Icelanders had no mistletoe, why should they introduce it into a story to which it did not belong ?

They might preserve it by tradition, but they would hardly invent it. Granting this, the mistletoe becomes the central point of the legend. The older mythologists, who only saw in it a sun-myth, overlooked the fact that since any weapon would have done to kill the God with, the mistletoe must have some special significance ; and if it is a genuine part of the story, as we have no reason to doubt, it will be hard to overturn Dr. Frazer's theory that the Baldr-myth is a relic of tree-worship and the ritual sacrifice of the God, Baldr being a tree-spirit whose soul is contained in the mistletoe.

The contradictions in the story, especially as told by Snorri (such as the confusion between the parts played by Höd and Loki, and the unsuspecting attitude of the Gods as Loki directs Höd's aim) are sometimes urged against its genuineness. They are rather proofs of antiquity. Apparent contradictions whose explanation is forgotten often survive in tradition ; the inventor of a new story takes care to make it consistent. It is probable, however, that there were originally only two actors in the episode, the victim and the slayer, and that Loki's part is later than Höd's, for he really belongs to the Valhall and Ragnarök myth, and was only introduced here as a link. The incident of the oath extracted from everything on earth to protect Baldr, which occurs in Snorri and in a paper MS. of *Baldr's Dreams*, was probably invented to

explain the choice of weapon, which would certainly need explanation to an Icelandic audience. If Dr. Frazer's theory be right, Vali, who slew the slayer, must also have been an original figure in the legend. His antiquity is supported by the fact that he plays the part of avenger in the poems; while in Snorri, where he is mentioned as a God, his absence from the account of Baldr's death is only a part of that literary development by which real responsibility for the murder was transferred from Höd to Loki.

Snorri gives Baldr a son, Forseti (Judge), who is also named as a God in *Grimnismal*. He must have grown out of an epithet of Baldr's, of whom Snorri says that "no one can resist his sentence"; the sacred tree would naturally be the seat of judgment.

The Wanes.—Three of the Norse divinities, Njörd and his son and daughter, are not Aesir by descent. The following account is given of their presence in Asgard:

(1) In *Vafthrudnismal*, Odin asks:

"Whence came Njörd among the sons of the Aesir? for he was not born of the Aesir."

VAFTHRUDNI. "In Vanaheim wise powers ordained and gave him for a hostage to the Gods; at the doom of the world he shall 'come back,' home to the wise Wanes."

(2) There is an allusion in *Völuspa* to the war which caused the giving of hostages :

“Odin shot into the host : this was the first war in the world. Broken was the wall of the citadel of the Aesir, so that the Wanes could tread the fields of war.”

(3) Loki taunts Njörd with his position, in *Lokasenna* :

“Thou wast sent from the east as a hostage to the Gods. . . .”

NJÖRD. “This is my comfort, though I was sent from far as a hostage to the Gods, yet I have a son whom no one hates, and he is thought the best of the Aesir.”

LOKI. “Stay, Njörd, restrain thy pride ; I will hide it no longer : thy son is thine own sister’s son, and that is no worse than one would expect.”

TYR. “Frey is the best of all the bold riders of Asgard.”

There is little doubt that Njörd was once a God of higher importance than he is in the Edda, where he is overshadowed by his son. Grimm’s suggestion that he and the goddess Nerthus, mentioned by Tacitus, were brother and sister, is supported by the line in *Lokasenna* ; it is an isolated reference, and the Goddess has left no other traces in Scandinavian mythology. They were the deities, probably agricultural, of an earlier age, whose adoption by the later Northmen was explained by the story of the compact between Aesir and Vanir. Then

their places were usurped by Frey and Freyja, who were possibly created out of epithets originally applied to the older pair; Njörd was retained with lessened importance, Nerthus passed out altogether. The Edda gives Njörd a giant-bride, Skadi, who was admitted among the Gods in atonement for the slaying of her father Thiazi; she is little more than a name. Frey and Freyja have other marks of agricultural deities, besides their relationship. Nothing is said about Frey's changing shape, but Freyja possesses a hawk-dress which Loki borrows when he wishes to change his form; and, according to Snorri, Frey was sacrificed to for the crops. Njörd has an epithet, "the wealthy," which may have survived from his earlier connexion with the soil. In that case, it would explain why, in Snorri and elsewhere, he is God of the sea and ships, once the province of the ocean-goddess Gefion; the transference is a natural one to an age whose wealth came from the sea.

In spite of their origin, Frey and Freyja become to all intents and purposes Aesir. Frey is to be one of the chief combatants at Ragnarök, with the fire-giant Surt for his antagonist, and a story is told to explain his defeat: he fell in love with Gerd, a giant-maid, and sacrificed his sword to get her; hence he is weaponless at the last fight. Loki alludes to this episode in *Lokasenna*: "With gold didst thou buy Gymi's daughter, and gavest

thy sword for her; but when Muspell's sons ride over Myrkwood, thou shalt not know with what to fight, unhappy one." The story is told in full in *Skirnisförr*.

Freyja is called by Snorri "the chief Goddess after Frigg," and the two are sometimes confused. Like her father and brother, she comes into connexion with the giants; she is the beautiful Goddess, and coveted by them. *Völuspá* says that the Gods went into consultation to discuss "who had given the bride of Od (*i.e.*, Freyja) to the giant race"; *Thrymskvida* relates how the giant Thrym bargained for Freyja as the ransom for Thor's hammer, which he had hidden, and how Loki and Thor outwitted him; and Snorri says the giants bargained for her as the price for building Valhalla, but were outwitted. Sir G. W. Dasent notices in the folk-tales the eagerness of trolls and giants to learn the details of the agricultural processes, and this is probably the clue to the desire of the Frost-Giants in the Edda for the possession of Freyja. Idunn, the wife of Bragi, and a purely Norse creation, seems to be a double of Freyja; she, too, according to Snorri, is carried away by the giants and rescued by Loki. The golden apples which she is to keep till Ragnarök remind us of those which Frey offered to Gerd; and the gift of eternal youth, of which they are the symbols, would be appropriate enough to Freyja as an agricultural deity.

The great necklace Brising, stolen by Loki and won back in fight by Heimdal (according to the tenth-century Skalds Thjodulf and Ulf Uggason), is Freyja's property. On this ground, she has been identified with the heroine of *Svipdag and Menglad*, a poem undoubtedly old, though it has only come down in paper MSS. It is in two parts, the first telling how Svipdag aroused the Sibyl Groa, his mother, to give him spells to guard him on his journey; the second describing his crossing the wall of fire which surrounded his fated bride Menglad. If Menglad is really Freyja, the "Necklace-glad," it is a curious coincidence that one poem connects the waverlowe, or ring of fire, with Frey also; for his bride Gerd is protected in the same way, though his servant Skirni goes through it in his place:

SKIRNI. "Give me the horse that will bear me through the dark magic waverlowe, and the sword that fights of itself against the giant-race."

FREY. "I give thee the horse that will bear thee through the dark magic waverlowe, and the sword that will fight of itself if he is bold who bears it."
(*Skirnisför.*)

The connexion of both with the Midsummer fires, originally part of an agricultural ritual, can hardly be doubted.

Loki, or Lopt, is a strange figure. He is admitted among the Aesir, though not one of them

by birth, and his whole relation to them points to his being an older elemental God. He is in alliance with them against the giants; he and Odin have sworn blood-brotherhood, according to *Lokasenna*, and he helps Thor to recover his hammer that Asgard may be defended against the giants. On the other hand, while in present alliance with the Gods, he is chief agent in their future destruction, and this they know. In Snorri, he is a mischievous spirit of the fairy-tale kind, exercising his ingenuity alternately in getting the Gods into difficulties, and in getting them out again. So he betrays Idunn to the giants, and delivers her; he makes the bargain by which Freyja is promised to the giant-builders of Valhalla, and invents the trick by which they are cheated of their prize; by killing the otter he endangers his own head, Odin's and Hoeni's, and he obtains the gold which buys their atonement. Hence, in the systematising of the Viking religion, the responsibility for Baldr's death also was transferred to him. At the coming of the fire-giants at Ragnarök, he is to steer the ship in which Muspell's sons sail (*Völuspa*), further evidence of his identity as a fire-spirit. Like his son the Wolf, he is chained by the Gods; the episode is related in a prose-piece affixed to *Lokasenna*:

“After that Loki hid himself in Franangr's Foss, in the form of a salmon. There the Aesir caught him. He was bound with the guts of his son Nari, but his

son Narfi was changed into a wolf. Skadi took a poisonous snake and fastened it up over Loki's face, and the poison dropped down. Sigyn, Loki's wife, sat there and held a cup under the poison. But when it was full she poured the poison away, and meanwhile poison dropped on Loki, and he struggled so hard that all the earth shook ; those are called earthquakes now."

Völuspa inserts lines corresponding to this passage after the Baldr episode, and Snorri makes it a consequence of Loki's share in that event.

He is more especially agent of the doom through his children : at Ragnarök, Fenri the Wolf, bound long before by Tyr's help, will be freed, and swallow the sun (*Vafthrudnismal*) and Odin (*Vafthrudnismal* and *Völuspa*) ; and Jörmungandr, the Giant-Snake, will rise from the sea where he lies curled round the world, to slay and be slain by Thor. The dragon's writhing in the waves is one of the tokens to herald Ragnarök, and his battle with Thor is the fiercest combat of that day. Only *Völuspa* of our poems gives any account of it : "Then comes the glorious son of Hlodyn, Odin's son goes to meet the serpent ; Midgard's guardian slays him in his rage, but scarcely can Earth's son reel back nine feet from the dragon."

When Thor goes fishing with the giant Hymi, he terrifies his companion by dragging the snake's head out of the sea, but he does not slay it ; it must wait there till Ragnarök :

“ The protector of men, the only slayer of the Serpent, baited his hook with the ox’s head. The God-hated one who girds all lands from below swallowed the bait. Doughtily pulled mighty Thor the poison-streaked serpent up to the side ; he struck down with his hammer the hideous head of the wolf’s companion. The monster roared, the wilderness resounded, the old earth shuddered all through. The fish sank back into the sea. Gloomy was the giant when they rowed back, so that he spoke not a word.”

There is nothing to suggest that Jörmungandr, to whom the word World-Snake (Midgardsorm) always refers in the Edda, is the same as Nidhögg, the serpent that gnaws at Yggdrasil’s roots ; but both are relics of Snake-worship.

The World-Ash, generally called Yggdrasil’s Ash, is one of the most interesting survivals of tree-worship. It is described by the Sibyl in *Völuspá* : “ I know an ash called Yggdrasil, a high tree sprinkled with white moisture (thence come the dews that fall in the dales) : it stands ever-green by Urd’s spring. Thence come three maids, all-knowing, from the hall that stands under the tree ” ; and as a sign of the approaching doom she says : “ Yggdrasil’s ash trembles as it stands ; the old tree groans.” *Grimnismál* says that the Gods go every day to hold judgment by the ash, and describes it further :

“ Three roots lie three ways under Yggdrasil’s ash : Hel dwells under one, the frost-giants under the second,

mortal men under the third. The squirrel is called Ratatosk who shall run over Yggdrasil's ash; he shall carry down the eagle's words, and tell them to Nidhögg below. There are four harts, with necks thrown back, who gnaw off the shoots. . . . More serpents lie under Yggdrasil's ash than any one knows. Ofni and Svafni I know will ever gnaw at the tree's twigs. Yggdrasil's ash suffers more hardships than men know: the hart bites above, the side decays, and Nidhögg gnaws below. . . . Yggdrasil's ash is the best of trees."

The snake and the tree are familiar in other mythologies, though in most other cases the snake is the protector, while here he is the destroyer. Both Nidhögg and Jörmungandr are examples of the destroying dragon rather than the treasure-guardian. The Ash is the oracle: the judgment-place of the Gods, the dwelling of the Fates, the source of the spring of knowledge.

Ragnarök.—The Twilight of the Gods (or Doom of the Gods) is the central point of the Viking religion. The Regin (of which *Ragna* is genitive plural) are the ruling powers, often called Ginnregin (the great Gods), Uppregin (the high Gods), Thrymregin (the warrior Gods). The word is commonly used of the Aesir in *Völuspá*; in *Alvissmál* the Regin seem to be distinguished from both Aesir and Vanir. The whole story of the Aesir is overshadowed by knowledge of this coming doom, the time when they shall meet foes more terrible than the giants,

and fall before them; their constant effort is to learn what will happen then, and to gather their forces together to meet it. The coming Ragnarök is the reason for the existence of Valhalla with its hosts of slain warriors; and of all the Gods, Odin, Thor, Tyr and Loki are most closely connected with it. Two poems of the verse Edda describe it:

(1) *Vafthrudnismal*:

V. "What is the plain called where Surt and the blessed Gods shall meet in battle?"

O. "Vigrid is the name of the place where Surt and the blessed Gods shall meet in battle. It is a hundred miles every way; it is their destined battle-field."

O. "Whence shall the sun come on the smooth heaven when Fenri has destroyed this one?"

V. "Before Fenri destroy her, the elf-beam shall bear a daughter: that maid shall ride along her mother's paths, when the Gods perish."

O. "Which of the Aesir shall rule over the realms of the Gods, when Surt's fire is quenched?"

V. "Vidar and Vali shall dwell in the sanctuary of the Gods when Surt's fire is quenched. Modi and Magni shall have Mjöllni at the end of Vingni's (*i.e.*, Thor's) combat."

O. "What shall be Odin's end, when the Gods perish?"

V. "The Wolf will swallow the father of men; Vidar will avenge it. He will cleave the Wolf's cold jaws in the battle."

(2) *Völuspá*:

"A hag sits eastward in Ironwood and rears Fenri's children; one of them all, in troll's shape, shall be the

sun's destroyer. He shall feed on the lives of death-doomed men ; with red blood he shall redden the seat of the Gods. The sunshine shall grow black, all winds will be unfriendly in the after-summers. . . . I see further in the future the great Ragnarök of the Gods of Victory. . . . Heimdal blows loudly, the horn is on high ; Yggdrasil's ash trembles as it stands, the old tree groans."

The following lines tell of the fire-giants and the various combats, and the last section of the poem deals with a new world when Baldr, Höd and Hoeni are to come back to the dwelling-place of the Gods.

The whole points to a belief in the early destruction of the world and the passing away of the old order of things. Whether the new world which *Vafthrudnismal* and *Völuspa* both prophesy belongs to the original idea or not is a disputed point. Probably it does not ; at all events, none of the old Aesir, according to the poems, are to survive, for Modi and Magni are not really Gods at all, Baldr, Höd and Vali belong to another myth, Hoeni had passed out of the hierarchy by his exchange with Njörd, and Vidar's origin is obscure.

The **Einherjar**, the great champions or chosen warriors, are intimately connected with Ragnarök. All warriors who fall in battle are taken to Odin's hall of the slain, Valhalla. According to *Grimnismal*, he "chooses every day men dead by the

sword"; his Valkyries ride to battle to give the victory and bring in the fallen. Hence Odin is the giver of victory. Loki in *Lokasenna* taunts him with giving victory to the wrong side: "Thou hast never known how to decide the battle among men. Thou hast often given victory to those to whom thou shouldst not give it, to the more cowardly"; this, no doubt, was in order to secure the best fighters for Valhalla. That the defeated side sometimes consoled themselves with this explanation of a notable warrior's fall is proved by the tenth-century dirge on Eirik Bloodaxe, where Sigmund the Volsung asks in Valhalla: "Why didst thou take the victory from him, if thou thoughtest him brave?" and Odin replies: "Because it is uncertain when the grey Wolf will come to the seat of the Gods." There are similar lines in Eyvind's dirge on Hakon the Good. In this way a host was collected ready for Ragnarök: for *Grimnismal* says: "There are five hundred doors and eighty in Valhalla; eight hundred Einherjar will go out from each door, when they go to fight the wolf." Meanwhile they fight and feast: "All the Einherjar in Odin's courts fight every day: they choose the slain and ride from the battle, and sit then in peace together" (*Vafthrudnismal*), and the Valkyries bear ale to them (*Grimnismal*).

It is often too hastily assumed that the Norse Ragnarök with the dependant Valhalla system are

in great part the outcome of Christian influence : of an imitation of the Christian Judgment Day and the Christian heaven respectively. Owing to the lateness of our material, it is, of course, impossible to decide how old the beliefs may be, but it is likely that the Valhalla idea only took form at the systematising of the mythology in the Viking age. The belief in another world for the dead is, however, by no means exclusively Christian, and a reference in *Grimnismal* suggests the older system out of which, under the influence of the Ragnarök idea, Valhalla was developed. The lines, "The ninth hall is Folkvang, where Freyja rules the ordering of seats in the hall; half the slain she chooses every day, Odin has the other half," are an evident survival of a belief that all the dead went to live with the Gods, Odin having the men, and Freyja (or more probably Frigg) the women; the idea being here confused with the later system, under which only those who fell in battle were chosen by the Gods. Christian colouring appears in the last lines of *Völuspa* and in Snorri, where men are divided into the "good and moral," who go after death to a hall of red gold, and the "perjurers and murderers," who are sent to a hall of snakes.

For Ragnarök also a heathen origin is at least as probable as a Christian one. I would suggest as a possibility that the expectation of the Twilight of

the Gods may have grown out of some ritual connected with the eclipse, such as is frequent among heathen races. Such ceremonies are a tacit acknowledgment of a doubt, and if they ever existed among the Scandinavians, the possibility, ever present to the savage mind, of a time when his efforts to help the light might be fruitless, and the darkness prove the stronger, would be the germ of his more civilised descendant's belief in Ragnarök.

By turning to the surviving poems of the Skalds, whose dates can be approximately reckoned from the sagas, we can fix an inferior limit for certain of the legends given above, placing them definitely in the heathen time. Reference has already been made to the corroboration of the Valhalla belief supplied by the elegies on Eirik Bloodaxe and Hakon the Good. In the former (which is anonymous, but must have been written soon after 950, since it was composed, on Eirik's death, by his wife's orders), Odin commands the Einherjar and Valkyries to prepare for the reception of the slain Eirik and his host, since no one knows how soon the Gods will need to gather their forces together for the great contest. Eyvind's dirge on Hakon (who fell in 970) is an imitation of this: Odin sends two Valkyries to choose a king to enter his service in Valhalla; they find Hakon on the battle-field, and he is slain with many of his followers. Great

preparation is made in Valhalla for his reception, and the poet ends by congratulating Hakon (who, though a Christian, having been educated in England, had not interfered with the heathen altars and sacrifices) on the toleration which has secured him such a welcome. A still earlier poet, Hornklofi, writing during the reign of Harald Fairhair (who died in 933), alludes to the slain as the property of "the one-eyed husband of Frigg."

Several Skalds mention legends of Thor: his fishing for the World-Snake is told by Bragi (who from his place in genealogies must have written before 900), and by Ulf Uggason and Eystein Valdason, both in the second half of the tenth century; and Thjodulf and Eilif (the former about 960, the latter a little later) tell tales of his fights with the giants. Turning to the other Gods, Egil Skallagrímsson (about 970) names Frey and Njörd as the givers of wealth; Bragi tells the story of Gefion's dragging the island of Zealand out of Lake Wener into the sea; and Ulf Uggason speaks of Heimdal's wrestling with Loki.

The legend of Idunn is told by Thjodulf much as Snorri tells it: Odin, Hoeni and Loki, while on a journey, kill and roast an ox. The giant Thiazi swoops down in eagle's shape and demands a share; Loki strikes the eagle, who flies off with him, releasing him only on condition that he will betray to the giants Idunn, "the care-healing maid who

understands the renewal of youth." He does so, and the Gods, who grow old and withered for want of her apples, force him to go and bring her back to Asgard.

The poet of *Eiriksmal*, quoted above, alludes to the Baldr myth: Bragi, hearing the approach of Eirik and his host, asks "What is that thundering and tramping, as if Baldr were coming back to Odin's hall?" The funeral pyre of Baldr is described by Ulf Uggason: he is burnt on his ship, which is launched by a giantess, in the presence of Frey, Heimdal, Odin and the Valkyries.

Though heathen writers outside of Scandinavia are lacking, references to Germanic heathendom fortunately survive in several Continental Christian historians of earlier date than any of our Scandinavian sources. The evidence of these, though scanty, is corroborative, and the allusions are in striking agreement with the Edda stories in tone and character.

Odin (Wodanus) is always identified by these writers with the Roman Mercurius (whom Tacitus named as the chief German God). This identification occurs in the eighth-century Paulus, Diaconus, and in Jonas of Bobbio (first half of the seventh century), and probably rests on Odin's character as a wandering God (Mercury being *διακτορος*), his disguises, and his patronage of poetry and eloquence (as Mercury is *λόγιος*). Odin

is not himself in general the conductor of dead souls (*ψυχοπομπός*), like the Roman God, his attendant Valkyries performing the office for him. The equation is only comprehensible on the presumption of the independence of Germanic mythology, and cannot be explained by transmission. For if Odin were in any degree an imitation of the Roman deity, other notable attributes of the latter would have been assigned to him: whereas in the Edda the thieving God (*κλέπτης*) is not Odin but Loki, and the founder of civilisation is Heimdal.

The legend of the origin of the Lombards given by Paulus Diaconus illustrates the relations of Odin and Frigg. The Vandals asked Wodan (Odin) to grant them victory over the Vinili; the latter made a similar prayer to Frea (Frigg), the wife of Wodan. She advised them to make their wives tie their hair round their faces like beards, and go with them to meet Wodan in the morning. They did so, and Wodan exclaimed, "Who are these *Long-beards*?" Then Frea said that having given the Vinili a name, he must give them the victory (as Helgi in the Edda claims a gift from Svava when she names him). As in *Grimnismal*, Odin and Frigg are represented as supporting rival claims, and Frigg gains the day for her favourites by superior cunning. This legend also shows Odin as the giver of victory.

Few heathen legends are told however by these

early Christian writers, and the Gods are seldom called by their German names. An exception is the Frisian Fosite mentioned by Alcuin (who died 804) and by later writers; he is to be identified with the Norse Forseti, the son of (probably at first an epithet of) Baldr, but no legend of him is told. It is disappointing that these writers should have said so little of any God except the chief one. A very characteristic touch survives in Gregory of Tours (died 594), when the Frank Chlodvig tells his Christian wife that the Christian God "cannot be proved to be of the race of the Gods," an idea entirely in keeping with the Eddic hierarchy. Before leaving the Continental historians, reference may be made to the abundant evidence of Germanic tree-worship to be gathered from them. The holy oak mentioned by Wilibald (before 786), the sacred pear-tree of Constantius (473), with numerous others, supply parallels to the World-Ash which is so important a feature of Norse mythology.

A study of this subject would be incomplete without some reference to the mythology of Saxo Grammaticus. His testimony on the old religion is unwilling, and his effort to discredit it very evident. The bitterness of his attack on Frigg especially suggests that she was, among the Northmen, a formidable rival to the Virgin. When he repeats a legend of the Gods, he transforms them into

mortal heroes, and when, as often happens, he refers to them accidentally as Gods, he invariably hastens to protest that he does so only because it had been the custom. He describes Thor and Odin as men versed in sorcery who claimed the rank of Gods; and in another passage he speaks of the latter as a king who had his seat at Upsala, and who was falsely credited with divinity throughout Europe. His description of Odin agrees with that in the Edda: an old man of great stature and mighty in battle, one-eyed, wearing a great cloak, and constantly wandering about in disguise. The story which Saxo tells of his driving into battle with Harald War-tooth, disguised as the latter's charioteer Brun, and turning the fight against him by revealing to his enemy Ring the order of battle which he had invented for Harald's advantage, is in thorough agreement with the traditional character of the God who betrayed Sigmund the Volsung and Helgi Hundingsbane. Saxo's version of the Baldr story has been mentioned already. Baldr's transformation into a hero (who could only be slain by a sword in the keeping of a wood-satyr) is almost complete. But Odin and Thor and all the Gods fight for him against his rival Hother; "so that it might be called a battle of Gods against men"; and Nanna's excuse to Baldr that "a God could not wed with a mortal," preserves a trace of his origin. The chained Loki appears in Saxo as

Utgarda-Loki, lying bound in a cavern of snakes, and worshipped as a God by the Danish king Gorm Haraldsson. Dr. Rydberg sees the Freyja myth in Saxo's story of Syritha, who was carried away by the giants and delivered by her lover Othar (the Od of the Edda): an example, like *Svipdag and Menglad*, of the complete transformation of a divine into an heroic myth. In almost all cases Saxo vulgarises the stories in the telling, a common result when a mythical tale is retold by a Christian writer, though it is still more conspicuous in his versions of the heroic legends.

APPENDIX

THRYMSKVIDA.

1. THEN Wing-Thor was angry when he awoke, and missed his hammer. He shook his beard, he tossed his hair, the son of Earth groped about for it.

2. And first of all he spoke these words : "Hear now, Loki, what I tell thee, a thing that no one in earth or heaven above has heard : the Asa has been robbed of his hammer !"

3. They went to the dwelling of fair Freyja, and these words he spoke first of all : "Wilt thou lend me, Freyja, thy feather dress, to see if I can find my hammer ?"

4. FREYJA. "I would give it thee, though it were of gold ; I would grant it, though it were of silver."

5. Then Loki flew, the feather-coat rustled, until he came out of Asgard and into Jötunheim.

6. Thrym, lord of the Giants, sat on a howe ; he twisted golden bands for his greyhounds and trimmed his horses' manes.

7. THRYM. "How is it with the Aesir ? How is it with the Elves ? Why art thou come alone into Jötunheim ?"

LOKI. "It is ill with the Aesir, it is ill with the Elves ; hast thou hidden the Thunderer's hammer ?"

8. THRYM. "I have hidden the Thunderer's hammer eight miles below the earth. No man shall bring it back, unless he bring me Freyja to wife."

9. Then Loki flew, the feather-coat rustled, until he came out of Jötunheim and into Asgard. Thor met

him in the middle of the court, and these words he spoke first:

10. "Hast thou news in proportion to thy toil? Tell me from on high thy distant tidings, for a sitting man often breaks down in his story, and he who lies down falls into falsehood."

11. LOKI. "I bring news for my toil: Thrym, lord of the Giants, has thy hammer; no man shall bring it back, unless he take him Freyja as a bride."

12. They went to see fair Freyja, spoke to her first of all these words: "Bind on the bridal veil, Freyja, we two must drive to Jötunheim."

13. Angry then was Freyja; she panted, so that all the hall of the Aesir trembled, and the great Brising necklace fell: "Eager indeed for marriage wouldst thou think me, if I should drive with thee to Jötunheim."

14. Then all the Aesir went into council, and all the Asynjor to consultation, and the mighty Gods discussed how they should recover the Thunderer's hammer.

15. Then spoke Heimdal, whitest of the Aesir; he could see into the future like the Vanir: "Let us bind on Thor the bridal veil; let him have the great necklace Brising.

16. "Let the keys jingle, and let women's weeds fall about his knees; let us put broad stones on his breast, and a hood dexterously on his head."

17. Then spoke Thor, the mighty Asa: "Vile would the Aesir call me, if I let the bridal veil be bound on me."

18. Then spoke Loki, Laufey's son: "Speak not such words, Thor! soon will the Giants dwell in Asgard, unless thou bring home thy hammer."

19. Then they bound on Thor the bridal veil, and the great necklace Brising; they let the keys jingle and women's weeds fall about his knees, and they put broad

stones on his breast, and the hood dexterously on his head.

20. Then spoke Loki, Laufey's son : "I also will go with thee as thy maiden ; we two will drive together to Jötunheim."

21. Then the goats were driven out, urged forward in their harness ; well must they run. Rocks were riven, the earth burned in flame : Odin's son was driving into Jötunheim.

22. Then spoke Thrym, lord of the Giants : "Stand up, giants, and strew the benches ! They are bringing me now Freyja my bride, Njörd's daughter from Noatun.

23. "Gold-horned kine run in the court, oxen all-black, the giant's delight. I have many treasures, I have many jewels, Freyja only is lacking."

24. The guests assembled early in the evening, and ale was carried to the Giants. One ox did Sif's husband eat, and eight salmon, and all the dishes prepared for the women ; three casks of mead he drank.

25. Then spoke Thrym, lord of the Giants : "Who ever saw a bride eat so eagerly ? I never saw a bride make such a hearty meal, nor a maid drink so deep of mead."

26. The prudent handmaid sat near, and she found answer to the Giant's words : "Eight nights has Freyja eaten nothing, so eager was she to be in Jötunheim."

27. He looked under the veil, he longed to kiss the bride, but he started back the length of the hall : "Why are Freyja's eyes so terrible ? Fire seems to burn from her eyes."

28. The prudent handmaid sat near, and she found answer to the Giant's speech : "Eight nights has Freyja had no sleep, so eager was she to be in Jötunheim."

29. In came the Giants' wretched sister, she dared to ask for a bridal gift : "Take from thine arms the red rings, if thou wouldst gain my love, my love and all my favour."

30. Then spoke Thrym, lord of the Giants : "Bring the hammer to hallow the bride. Lay Mjöllni on the maiden's knee, hallow us two in wedlock."

31. The Thunderer's heart laughed in his breast, when the bold of soul felt the hammer. Thrym killed he first, the lord of the Giants, and all the race of the Giants he struck.

32. He slew the Giants' aged sister, who had asked him for a bridal gift. She got a blow instead of shillings, and a stroke of the hammer for abundance of rings. So Odin's son got back his hammer.

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I. STUDY IN THE ORIGINAL.

(1) *Poetic Edda*.—The classic edition, and on the whole the best, is Professor Bugge's (Christiania, 1867); the smaller editions of Hildebrand (*Die Lieder der Alteren Edda*, Paderborn, 1876), and Finnur Jónsson (*Eddalieder*, Halle, 1888-90) are also good; the latter is in two parts, *Göttersage* and *Heldensage*. The poems may also be found in the first volume of Vigfusson and Powell's *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* (Oxford, 1883), accompanied by translations; but in many cases they are cut up and rearranged, and they suffer metrically from the system adopted of printing two short lines as one long one, with no dividing point. There is an excellent palæographic edition of the *Codex Regius of the Elder Edda*, by Wimmer and Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen, 1891), with photographic reproductions interleaved with a literal transcription.

(2) *Snorra Edda*.—The most recent edition of the whole is Dr. Finnur Jónsson's (Copenhagen, 1875). There is a useful edition of the mythological portions (*i.e.*, *Gylfaginning*, *Bragarædur*, and the narrative parts of *Skaldskaparmál*) by Ernst Wilken (*Die Prosaische Edda*, Paderborn, 1878).

(3) *Dictionaries and Grammars*.—For the study of the Poetic Edda, Gering's *Glossar zu den Liedern der Edda* (Paderborn, 1896) will be found most useful; it is com-

plete and trustworthy, and in small compass. A similar service has been performed for *Snorra Edda* in Wilken's *Glossar* (Paderborn, 1883), which forms a second volume to his edition, mentioned above. Both are, of course, in German. The only English dictionary is the lexicon of Cleasby and Vigfusson (Oxford).

Of Grammars, the best are German ; those of Noreen (*Altnordische Grammatik*, Halle, 1892), of which there is an abbreviated edition, and Kahle (*Altisländisches Elementarbuch*, Heidelberg, 1896) being better suited for advanced students ; the English grammars included in Vigfusson and Powell's *Icelandic Reader* (Oxford) and Sweet's *Icelandic Primer* (Oxford) are more elementary, and therefore hardly adequate for the study of the verse literature.

II. TRANSLATIONS.

There are English translations of the Elder Edda by Anderson (Chicago, 1879) and Thorpe (1866), as well as the translations in the *Corpus Poeticum*, which are, of course, liable to the same objection as the text. The most accurate German translation is Gering's (Leipzig, 1893) ; in Simrock's (*Ältere und Jüngere Edda*, Stuttgart, 1882), the translations of the verse Edda are based on an uncritical text. *Snorra Edda* was translated into English by Dasent (Stockholm, 1842) ; also by Anderson (Chicago, 1880).

III. MODERN AUTHORITIES.

To the works on Northern mythology mentioned below in the note on the Baldr theories, must be added Dr. Rydberg's *Teutonic Mythology* (English version by R. B. Anderson, London, 1889), which devotes special attention to Saxo.

NOTES

HOME OF THE EDDA. (Page 2.)

THE chief apologists for the British theory are Professor Bugge (*Studien über die Entstehung der nordischen Götter- und Heldensagen*, München, 1889), and the editors of the *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* (see the Introduction to that work, and also the Prolegomena prefixed to their edition of the *Sturlunga Saga*, Oxford). The case for Norway and Greenland is argued by Dr. Finnur Jónsson (*Den oldnorske og oldislandske Literaturs - Historie*, Copenhagen). The cases for both British and Norwegian origin are based chiefly on rather fanciful arguments from supposed local colour. The theory of the *Corpus Poeticum* editors that many of the poems were composed in the Scottish isles is discredited by the absence of Gaelic words or traces of Gaelic legend. Professor Bugge's North of England theory is slightly stronger, being supported by several Old English expressions in the poems, but these are not enough to prove that they were composed in England, since most Icelanders travelled east at some time of their lives.

(Page 3.)

A later study will deal with the Heroic legends.

YNGLINGA SAGA. (Page 3.)

Ynglinga Saga is prefixed to the Lives of the Kings in the collection known as *Heimskringla* (edited by Unger, Christiania, 1868, and by Finnur Jónsson, Christiania, 1893); there is an English translation in Laing's *Lives of the Kings of Norway* (London, 1889).

VÖLUSPA. (Page 4.)

A poem of similar form occurs among the heroic poems. *Gripisspa*, a prophetic outline of Sigurd's life, introduces the Volsung poems, as *Völuspa* does the Asgard cycle.

RIDDLE-POEMS. (Page 6.)

So many of the mythological poems are in this form that they suggest the question, did the asking of riddles form any part of Scandinavian ritual?

THE AESIR. (Page 11.)

Ynglinga Saga says that Odin and the Aesir came to Norway from Asia; a statement due, of course, to a false etymology, though theories as to the origin of Norse mythology have been based on it.

TYR. (Page 12.)

Tyr is etymologically identical with Zeus, and with the Sanskrit Dyaus (Sky-God).

BALDR. (Pages 16 to 22.)

The Baldr theories are stated in the following authorities:

(1) Ritual origin : Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, vol. 3.

(2) Heroic origin : Golther, *Handbuch der Germanischen Mythologie* (Leipzig, 1895); Niedner, *Eddische Fragen* (*Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum*, new series, 29), *Zur Lieder-Edda* (*Zeitschr. f. d. Alt.* vol. 36).

(3) Solar myth : Sir G. W. Cox, *Mythology of the Aryan Nations* (London, 1870); Max Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, vol. 4.

(4) Borrowed : Bugge, *Studien über die Entstehung der nordischen Götter- und Heldensagen* (transl. Brenner, München, 1889).

VEGTAMSKVIDA. (Page 17.)

The word *hroðrbaðm* (which I have given as "branch of fame") would perhaps be more accurately translated "tree of fame," which Gering explains as a kenning for Baldr. But there are no kennings of the same sort in the poem, and the line would have no meaning. If it refers to the mistletoe, as most commentators agree, it merely shows that the poet was ignorant of the nature of the plant, which would be in favour of its antiquity, rather than the reverse.

SAXO GRAMMATICUS. (Page 18.)

English translation by Professor Elton (London, D. Nutt, 1894). As Saxo's references to the old Gods are made in much the same sympathetic tone as that adopted by Old Testament writers towards heathen deities, his testimony on mythological questions is of the less value.

THE MISTLETOE. (Page 20.)

It seems incredible that any writers should turn to the

travesty of the Baldr story given in the almost worthless saga of Hromund Gripsson in support of a theory. In it "Bildr" is killed by Hromund, who has the sword Mistilteinn. It must be patent to any one that this is a perverted version of a story which the narrator no longer understood.

LOKI. (Page 26.)

It is hardly necessary to point out the parallel between Loki and Prometheus, also both helper and enemy of the Gods, and agent in their threatened fall, though in the meantime a prisoner. In character Loki has more in common with the mischievous spirit described by Hesiod, than with the heroic figure of Aeschylus. The struggles of Loki (p. 28) find a parallel in those of the fire-serpent Typhon, to which the Greeks attributed earthquakes.

ECLIPSE RITUAL. (Page 35.)

Mr. Lang, in *Myth, Ritual, and Religion* (London, 1887), gives examples of eclipse ritual. Grimm, in the *Teutonic Mythology*, vol. 2, quotes Finnish and Lithuanian myths about sun-devouring beasts, very similar to the Fenri myth.

THE SKALDS. (Page 35.)

All the Skaldic verses will be found, with translations, in the *Corpus Poeticum*.

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SAXO GRAMMATICUS. The first nine books of the Danish History translated for the first time into English by O. ELTON. With considerations on Saxo's sources, historical methods, and Folklore, by F. YORK POWELL. Demy 8vo. 1898. cxxviii, 425 pp. Cloth. Net, 15s.

Saxo is, with the Eddaic collections, our chief authority for the historical and heroic literature of the North. Prof. York Powell's "considerations" are, in reality, an ample mythological and folklore commentary.

THE HOME OF THE EDDIC POEMS,

with especial reference to the Helgi Lays. By Professor SOPHUS BRUGGE, translated by W. H. SCHOFIELD. 1899. lxxx, 408 pp. 12s. 6d.

In this work Prof. Bugge has fully set forth his views with regard to the plan of composition and that of the Eddaic poetry, and with regard to the origin of the Eddaic Mythology.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The present study forms a sequel to No. 12 (The Edda : Divine Mythology of the North), to which the reader is referred for introductory matter and for the general Bibliography. Additional bibliographical references are given, as the need occurs, in the notes to the present number.

MANCHESTER,

July 1902.

THE EDDA :

II. THE HEROIC MYTHOLOGY OF THE NORTH

SIGEMUND the Waelsing and Fitela, Aetla, Eorman-ric the Goth and Gifica of Burgundy, Ongendtheow and Theodric, Heorrenda and the Heodenings, and Weland the Smith : all these heroes of Germanic legend were known to the writers of our earliest English literature. But in most cases the only evidence of this knowledge is a word, a name, here and there, with no hint of the story attached. For circumstances directed the poetical gifts of the Saxons in England towards legends of the saints and Biblical paraphrase, away from the native heroes of the race ; while later events completed the exclusion of Germanic legend from our literature, by substituting French and Celtic romance. Nevertheless, these few brief references in *Beowulf* and in the small group of heathen English relics give us the right to a peculiar interest in the hero-poems of the Edda.

In studying these heroic poems, therefore, we are confronted by problems entirely different in character from those which have to be considered in connexion with the mythical texts. Those are in the main the product of one, the Northern, branch of the Germanic race, as we have seen (No. 12 of this series), and the chief question to be determined is whether they represent, however altered in form, a mythology common to all the Germans, and as such necessarily early; or whether they are in substance, as well as in form, a specific creation of the Scandinavians, and therefore late and secondary. The heroic poems of the Edda, on the contrary, with the exception of the Helgi cycle, have very close analogues in the literatures of the other great branches of the Germanic race, and these we are able to compare with the Northern versions.

The Edda contains poems belonging to the following heroic cycles:

(a) **Weland the Smith.**—Anglo-Saxon literature has several references to this cycle, which must have been a very popular one; and there is also a late Continental German version preserved in an Icelandic translation. But the poem in the Edda is the oldest connected form of the story.

(b) **Sigurd and the Nibelungs.**—Again the oldest reference is in Anglo-Saxon. There

are two well-known Continental German versions in the *Nibelungen Lied* and the late Icelandic *Thidreks Saga*, but the Edda, on the whole, has preserved an earlier form of the legend. With it is loosely connected

(c) **The Eрманric Cycle.**—The oldest references to this are in Latin and Anglo-Saxon. The Continental German version in the *Thidreks Saga* is late, and, like that in the Edda, contaminated with the Sigurd story, with which it had originally nothing to do.

(d) **Helgi.**—This cycle, at least in its present form, is peculiar to the Scandinavian North.

All the above-named poems are contained in Codex Regius of the Elder Edda. From other sources we may add other poems which are Eddic, not Skaldic, in style, in which other heroic cycles are represented. The great majority of the poems deal with the favourite story of the Volsungs, which threatens to swamp all the rest; for one hero after another, Burgundian, Hun, Goth, was absorbed into it. The poems in this part of the MS. differ far more widely in date and style than do the mythological ones; many of the Volsung-lays are comparatively late, and lack the fine simplicity which characterises the older popular poetry.

Völund.—The lay of Völund, the wonderful smith, the Weland of the Old English poems and

the only Germanic hero who survived for any considerable time in English popular tradition, stands alone in its cycle, and is the first heroic poem in the MS. It is in a very fragmentary state, some of the deficiencies being supplied by short pieces of prose. There are two motives in the story: the Swan-maids, and the Vengeance of the Captive Smith. Three brothers, Slagfinn, Egil and Völund, sons of the Finnish King, while out hunting built themselves a house by the lake in Wolfsdale. There, early one morning, they saw three Valkyries spinning, their swancoats lying beside them. The brothers took them home; but after seven years the swan-maidens, wearied of their life, flew away to battle, and did not return.

“Seven years they stayed there, but in the eighth longing seized them, and in the ninth need parted them.” Egil and Slagfinn went to seek their wives, but Völund stayed where he was and worked at his forge. There Nithud, King of Sweden, took him captive :

“Men went by night in studded mailcoats ; their shields shone by the waning moon. They dismounted from the saddle at the hall-gable, and went in along the hall. They saw rings strung on bast which the hero owned, seven hundred in all ; they took them off and put them on again, all but one. The keen-eyed archer Völund came in from hunting, from a far road. . . . He sat on a bear-skin and counted his rings, and the prince of the elves missed one ; he thought Hlodve’s

daughter, the fairy-maid, had come back. He sat so long that he fell asleep, and awoke powerless : heavy bonds were on his hands, and fetters clasped on his feet."

They took him away and imprisoned him, hamstrung, - on an island to forge treasures for his captors. Then Völund planned vengeance :

" ' I see on Nithud's girdle the sword which I knew keenest and best, and which I forged with all my skill. The glittering blade is taken from me for ever ; I shall not see it borne to Völund's smithy. Now Bödvild wears my bride's red ring ; I expect no atonement.' He sat and slept not, but struck with his hammer."

Nithud's children came to see him in his smithy : the two boys he slew, and made drinking-cups for Nithud from their skulls ; and the daughter Bödvild he beguiled, and having made himself wings he rose into the air and left her weeping for her lover and Nithud mourning his sons.

In the Old English poems allusion is made only to the second part of the story ; there is no reference to the legend of the enchanted brides, which is indeed distinct in origin, being identical with the common tale of the fairy wife who is obliged to return to animal shape through some breach of agreement by her mortal husband. This incident of the compact (*i.e.*, to hide the swan-coat, to refrain from asking the wife's name, or whatever it may have been) has been lost in the Völund

tale. The Continental version is told in the late Icelandic *Thidreks Saga*, where it is brought into connexion with the Volsung story; in this the story of the second brother, Egil the archer, is also given, and its antiquity is supported by the pictures on the Anglo-Saxon carved whale-bone box known as the Franks Casket, dated by Professor Napier at about 700 A.D. The adventures of the third brother, Slagfinn, have not survived. The Anglo-Saxon gives Völund and Bödvild a son, Widia or Wudga, the Wittich who appears as a follower of Dietrich's in the Continental German sources.

The Volsungs.—No story better illustrates the growth of heroic legend than the Volsung cycle. It is composite, four or five mythical motives combining to form the nucleus; and as it took possession more and more strongly of the imagination of the early Germans, and still more of the Scandinavians, other heroic cycles were brought into dependence on it. None of the Eddic poems on the subject are quite equal in poetic value to the Helgi lays; many are fragmentary, several late, and only one attempts a review of the whole story. The outline is as follows: Sigurd the Volsung, son of Sigmund and brother of Sinfjötli, slays the dragon who guards the Nibelungs' hoard on the Glittering Heath, and thus inherits the curse which

accompanies the treasure; he finds and wakens Brynhild the Valkyrie, lying in an enchanted sleep guarded by a ring of fire, loves her and plights troth with her; Grimhild, wife of the Burgundian Giuki, by enchantment causes him to forget the Valkyrie, to love her own daughter Gudrun, and, since he alone can cross the fire, to win Brynhild for her son Gunnar. After the marriage, Brynhild discovers the trick, and incites her husband and his brothers to kill Sigurd.

The series begins with a prose piece on the Death of Sinfjötli,, which says that after Sinfjötli, son of Sigmund, Volsung's son (which should be Valsi's son, Volsung being a tribal, not a personal, name), had been poisoned by his stepmother Borghild, Sigmund married Hjördis, Eylimi's daughter, had a son Sigurd, and fell in battle against the race of Hunding. Sigmund, as in all other Norse sources, is said to be king in Frankland, which, like the Niderlant of the *Nibelungen Lied*, means the low lands on the Rhine. The scene of the story is always near that river: Sigurd was slain by the Rhine, and the treasure of the Rhine is quoted as proverbial in the *Völund lay*.

Gripisspa (the Prophecy of Gripi), which follows, is appropriately placed first of the Volsung poems, since it gives a summary of the whole story. Sigurd rides to see his mother's brother, Gripi, the wisest of men, to ask about his destiny, and the soothsayer

prophesies his adventures and early death. This poem makes clear some original features of the legend which are obscured elsewhere, especially in the Gudrun set ; Grimhild's treachery, and Sigurd's unintentional breach of faith to Brynhild. In the speeches of both Gripi and Sigurd, the poet shows clearly that Brynhild had the first right to Sigurd's faith, while the seer repeatedly protests his innocence in breaking it : " Thou shalt never be blamed though thou didst betray the royal maid. . . . No better man shall come on earth beneath the sun than thou, Sigurd." On the other hand, the poet gives no indication that Brynhild and the sleeping Valkyrie are the same, which is a sign of confusion. Like all poems in this form, *Gripisspa* is a late composition embodying earlier tradition.

The other poems are mostly episodical, though arranged so as to form a continued narrative. *Gripisspa* is followed by a compilation from two or more poems in different metres, generally divided into three parts in the editions : *Reginsmal* gives the early history of the treasure and the dragon, and Sigurd's battle with Hunding's sons ; *Fafnis-mal*, the slaying of the dragon and the advice of the talking birds ; *Sigrdrifumal*, the awakening of the Valkyrie. Then follows a fragment on the death of Sigurd. All the rest, except the poem generally called the *Third*, or *Short, Sigurd Lay* (which tells of the marriage with Gudrun and Sigurd's wooing

of Brynhild for Gunnar) continue the story after Sigurd's death, taking up the death of Brynhild, Gudrun's mourning, and the fates of the other heroes who became connected with the legend of the treasure.

In addition to the poems in the Elder Edda, an account of the story is given by Snorri in *Skaldskaparmál*, but it is founded almost entirely on the surviving lays. *Völsunga Saga* is also a paraphrase, but more valuable, since parts of it are founded on lost poems, and it therefore, to some extent, represents independent tradition. It was, unfortunately from a literary point of view, compiled after the great saga-time was over, in the decadent fourteenth century, when material of all kinds, classical, biblical, romantic, mythological, was hastily cast into saga-form. It is not, like the *Nibelungen Lied*, a work of art, but it has what in this case is perhaps of greater importance, the one great virtue of fidelity. The compiler did not, like the author of the German masterpiece, boldly recast his material in the spirit of his own time; he clung closely to his originals, only trying with hesitating hand to copy the favourite literary form of the Icelandic. As a saga, therefore, *Völsunga* is far behind not only such great works as *Njála*, but also many of the smaller sagas. It lacks form, and is marred by inconsistencies; it is often careless in grammar and diction; it is full of traces of the decadent

romantic age. Sigurd, in the true spirit of romance, is endowed with magic weapons and supernatural powers, which are no improvement on the heroic tradition, "Courage is better than a good sword." At every turn, Odin is at hand to help him, which tends to efface the older and truer picture of the hero with all the fates against him ; such heroes, found again and again in the historic sagas, more truly represent the heathen heroic age and that belief in the selfishness and caprice of the Gods on which the whole idea of sacrifice rests. There is also the inevitable deterioration in the character of Brynhild, without the compensating elevation in that of her rival by which the *Nibelungen Lied* places Chriemhild on a height as lofty and unapproachable as that occupied by the Norse Valkyrie ; the Brynhild of *Völsunga Saga* is something of a virago, the Gudrun is jealous and shrewish. But for actual material, the compiler is absolutely to be trusted ; and *Völsunga Saga* is therefore, in spite of artistic faults, a priceless treasure-house for the real features of the legend.

There are two main elements in the Volsung story : the slaying of the dragon, and the awakening and desertion of Brynhild. The latter is brought into close connexion with the former, which becomes the real centre of the action. In the Anglo-Saxon reference, the fragment in *Beowulf*, the second episode does not appear.

In this, the oldest version of the story, which, except for a vague reference to early feats by Sigmund and Sinfjötli, consists solely of the dragon adventure, the hero is not Sigurd, but Sigemund the Waelsing. All that it tells is that Sigemund, Fitela (Sinfjötli) not being with him, killed the dragon, the guardian of the hoard, and loaded a ship with the treasure. The few preceding lines only mention the war which Sigmund and Sinfjötli waged on their foes. They are there uncle and nephew, and there is no suggestion of the closer relationship assigned to them by *Völsunga Saga*, which tells their story in full.

Sigmund, one of the ten sons of Volsung (who is himself of miraculous birth) and the Wishmaiden Hlod, is one of the chosen heroes of Odin. His twin-sister Signy is married against her will to Siggeir, an hereditary enemy, and at the wedding-feast Odin enters and thrusts a sword up to the hilt into the tree growing in the middle of the hall. All try to draw it, but only the chosen Sigmund succeeds. Siggeir, on returning to his own home with his unwilling bride, invites her father and brothers to a feast. Though suspecting treachery, they come, and are killed one after another, except Sigmund who is secretly saved by his sister and hidden in the wood. She meditates revenge, and as her two sons grow up to the age of ten, she tests their courage, and finding it wanting makes

Sigmund kill both: the expected hero must be a Volsung through both parents. She therefore visits Sigmund in disguise, and her third son, Sinfjötli, is the child of the Volsung pair. At ten years old, she sends him to live in the wood with Sigmund, who only knows him as Signy's son. For years they live as wer-wolves in the wood, till the time comes for vengeance. They set fire to Siggeir's hall; and Signy, after revealing Sinfjötli's real parentage, goes back into the fire and dies there, her vengeance achieved:

"I killed my children, because I thought them too weak to avenge our father; Sinfjötli has a warrior's might because he is both son's son and daughter's son to King Volsung. I have laboured to this end, that King Siggeir should meet his death; I have so toiled for the achieving of revenge that I am now on no condition fit for life. As I lived by force with King Siggeir, of free will shall I die with him."

Though no poem survives on this subject, the story is certainly primitive; its savage character vouches for its antiquity. *Völsunga* then reproduces the substance of the prose *Death of Sinfjötli* mentioned above, the object of which, as a part of the cycle, seems to be to remove Sinfjötli and leave the field clear for Sigurd. It preserves a touch which may be original in Sinfjötli's burial, which resembles that of Scyld in *Beowulf*: his father lays him in a boat steered by an old man, which immediately disappears.

Sigmund and Sinfjötli are always close comrades, "need-companions" as the Anglo-Saxon calls them. They are indivisible and form one story. Sigurd, on the other hand, is only born after his father Sigmund's death. *Völsunga* says that Sigmund fell in battle against Hunding, through the interference of Odin, who, justifying Loki's taunt that he "knew not how to give the victory fairly," shattered with his spear the sword he had given to the Volsung. For this again we have to depend entirely on the prose, except for one line in *Hyndluljóð*: "The Father of Hosts gives gold to his followers; . . . he gave Sigmund a sword." And from the poems too, Sigurd's fatherless childhood is only to be inferred from an isolated reference, where giving himself a false name he says to Fafni: "I came a motherless child; I have no father like the sons of men." Sigmund, dying, left the fragments of the sword to be given to his unborn son, and Sigurd's fosterfather Regin forged them anew for the future dragon-slayer. But Sigurd's first deed was to avenge on Hunding's race the death of his father and his mother's father. *Völsunga* tells this story first of Helgi and Sinfjötli, then of Sigurd, to whom the poems also attribute the deed. It is followed by the dragon-slaying.

Up to this point, the story of Sigurd consists roughly of the same features which mark that of Sigmund and Sinfjötli. Both are probably, like

Helgi, versions of a race-hero myth. In each case there is the usual irregular birth, in different forms, both familiar; a third type, the miraculous or supernatural birth, is attributed by *Völsunga* to Sigmund's father Volsung. Each story again includes a deed of vengeance, and a dragon and treasure. The sword which the hero alone could draw, and the wer-wolf, appear only in the Sigmund and Sinfjötli version. Among those Germanic races which brought the legend to full perfection, Sigurd's version soon became the sole one, and Sigmund and Sinfjötli practically drop out.

The Dragon legend of the Edda is much fuller and more elaborate than that of any other mythology. As a rule tradition is satisfied with the existence of the monster "old and proud of his treasure," but here we are told its full previous history, certain features of which (such as the shape-shifting) are signs of antiquity, whether it was originally connected with the Volsungs or not.

As usual, *Völsunga* gives the fullest account, in the form of a story told by Regin to his foster-son Sigurd, to incite him to slay the dragon. Regin was one of three brothers, the sons of Hreidmar; one of the three, Otr, while in the water in otter's shape, was seen by three of the Aesir, Odin, Loki and Hoeni, and killed by Loki. Hreidmar demanded as wergild enough gold to fill the otter's

skin, and Loki obtained it by catching the dwarf Andvari, who lived in a waterfall in the form of a fish, and allowing him to ransom his head by giving up his wealth. One ring the dwarf tried to keep back, but in vain; and thereupon he laid a curse upon it: that the ring with the rest of the gold should be the death of whoever should get possession of it. In giving the gold to Hreidmar, Odin also tried to keep back the ring, but had to give it up to cover the last hair. Then Fafni, one of the two remaining sons, killed his father, first victim of the curse, for the sake of the gold. He carried it away and lay guarding it in the shape of a snake. But Regin the smith did not give up his hopes of possessing the hoard: he adopted as his foster-son Sigurd the Volsung, thus getting into his power the hero fated to slay the dragon.

The curse thus becomes the centre of the action, and the link between the two parts of the story, since it directly accounts for Sigurd's unconscious treachery and his separation from Brynhild, and absolves the hero from blame by making him a victim of fate. It destroys in turn Hreidmar, the Dragon, his brother Regin, the dragon-slayer himself, Brynhild (to whom he gave the ring), and the Giukings, who claimed inheritance after Sigurd's death. Later writers carried its effects still further.

This narrative is also told in the pieces of prose

interspersed through *Reginsmal*. The verse consists only of scraps of dialogue. The first of these comprises question and answer between Loki and the dwarf Andvari in the form of the old riddle-poems, and seems to result from the confusion of two ideas : the question-and-answer wager, and the captive's ransom by treasure. Then follows the curse, in less general terms than in the prose : " My gold shall be the death of two brothers, and cause strife among eight kings ; no one shall rejoice in the possession of my treasure." Next comes a short dialogue between Loki and Hreidmar, in which the former warns his host of the risk he runs in taking the hoard. In the next fragment Hreidmar calls on his daughters to avenge him ; Lyngheid replies that they cannot do so on their own brother, and her father bids her bear a daughter whose son may avenge him. This has given rise to a suggestion that Hjördis, Sigurd's mother, was daughter to Lyngheid, but if that is intended, it may only be due to the Norse passion for genealogy. The next fragment brings Regin and Sigurd together, and the smith takes the young Volsung for his foster-son. A speech of Sigurd's follows, in which he refuses to seek the treasure till he has avenged his father on Hunding's sons. The rest of the poem is concerned with the battle with Hunding's race, and Sigurd's meeting with Odin by the way.

The fight with Fafni is not described in verse, very little of this poetry being in narrative form ; but *Fafnismal* gives a dialogue between the wounded dragon and his slayer. Fafni warns the Volsung against the hoard : "The ringing gold and the glowing treasure, the rings shall be thy death." Sigurd disregards the warning with the maxim "Every man must die some time," and asks questions of the dragon in the manner of *Vafthrudnismal*. Fafni, after repeating his warning, speaks of his brother's intended treachery : "Regin betrayed me, he will betray thee ; he will be the death of both of us," and dies. Regin returning bids Sigurd roast Fafni's heart, while he sleeps. A prose-piece tells that Sigurd burnt his fingers by touching the heart, put them in his mouth, and understood the speech of birds. The advice given him by the birds is taken from two different poems, and partly repeats itself ; the substance is a warning to Sigurd against the treachery plotted by Regin, and a counsel to prevent it by killing him, and so become sole owner of the hoard. Sigurd takes advantage of the warning : "Fate shall not be so strong that Regin shall give my death-sentence : both brothers shall go quickly hence to Hel." Regin's enjoyment of the hoard is therefore short.

The second half of the story begins when one of the birds, after a reference to Gudrun, guides Sigurd to the sleeping Valkyrie :

“Bind up the red rings, Sigurd ; it is not kingly to fear. I know a maid, fairest of all, decked with gold, if thou couldst get her. Green roads lead to Giuki’s, fate guides the wanderer forward. There a mighty king has a daughter; Sigurd will buy her with a dowry. There is a hall high on Hindarfell ; all without it is swept with fire. . . . I know a battle-maid who sleeps on the fell, and the flame plays over her ; Odin touched the maid with a thorn, because she laid low others than those he wished to fall. Thou shalt see, boy, the helmed maid who rode Vingskorni from the fight ; Sigdrifa’s sleep cannot be broken, son of heroes, by the Norns’ decrees.”

Sigdrifa (dispenser of victory) is, of course, Brynhild ; the name may have been originally an epithet of the Valkyrie, and it was probably such passages as this that misled the author of *Gripisspa* into differentiating the Valkyrie and Brynhild. The last lines have been differently interpreted as a warning to Sigurd not to seek Brynhild and an attempt to incite him to do so by emphasising the difficulty of the deed ; they may merely mean that her sleep cannot be broken except by one, namely, the one who knows no fear. Brynhild’s supernatural origin is clearly shown here, and also in the prose in *Sigdrifumal*. *Völsunga Saga*, though it paraphrases in full the passages relating to the magic sleep, removes much of the mystery surrounding her by providing her with a genealogy and family connections ; while the *Nibelungen Lied* goes further still in the same direction by leaving out

the magic sleep. The change is a natural result of Christian ideas, to which Odin's Wishmaidens would become incomprehensible.

Thus far the story is that of the release of the enchanted princess, popularly most familiar in the nursery tale of the Sleeping Beauty. After her broken questions to her deliverer, "What cut my mail? How have I broken from sleep? Who has flung from me the dark spells?" and his answer, "Sigmund's son and Sigurd's sword," she bursts into the famous "Greeting to the World":

"Long have I slept, long was I sunk in sleep, long are men's misfortunes. It was Odin's doing that I could not break the runes of sleep. Hail, day! hail, sons of day! hail, night! Look on us two with gracious eyes, and give victory to us who sit here. Hail, Aesir! hail, Asynjor! hail, Earth, mother of all! give eloquence and wisdom to us the wonderful pair, and hands of healing while we live."

She then becomes Sigurd's guardian and protectress and the source of his wisdom, as she speaks the runes and counsels which are to help him in all difficulties; and from this point corresponds to the maiden who is the hero's benefactress, but whom he deserts through sorcery: the "Master-maid" of the fairy-tales, the Medeia of Greek myth. Gudrun is always an innocent instrument in drawing Sigurd away from his real bride, the actual agent being her witch-mother Grimhild. This part of the story is summarised in *Gripisspa*, except that the

writer seems unaware that the Wishmaiden who teaches Sigurd "every mystery that men would know" and the princess he betrays are the same :

"A king's daughter bright in mail sleeps on the fell ; thou shalt hew with thy sharp sword, and cut the mail with Fafni's slayer. . . . She will teach thee every mystery that men would know, and to speak in every man's tongue. . . . Thou shalt visit Heimi's dwelling and be the great king's joyous guest. . . . There is a maid fair to see at Heimi's ; men call her Brynhild, Budli's daughter, but the great king Heimi fosters the proud maid. . . . Heimi's fair foster-daughter will rob thee of all joy ; thou shalt sleep no sleep, and judge no cause, and care for no man unless thou see the maiden. . . . Ye shall swear all binding oaths but keep few when thou hast been one night Giuki's guest, thou shalt not remember Heimi's brave foster-daughter. . . . Thou shalt suffer treachery from another and pay the price of Grimhild's plots. The bright-haired lady will offer thee her daughter."

Völsunga gives additional details : Brynhild knows her deliverer to be Sigurd Sigmundsson and the slayer of Fafni, and they swear oaths to each other. The description of their second meeting, when he finds her among her maidens, and she prophesies that he will marry Giuki's daughter, and also the meeting between her and Gudrun before the latter's marriage, represent a later development of the story, inconsistent with the older conception of the Shield-maiden. Sigurd gives Brynhild the ring Andvaranaut, which belonged to the hoard, as a pledge, and takes it from her again

later when he woos her in Gunnar's form. It is the sight of the ring afterwards on Gudrun's hand which reveals to her the deception ; but the episode has also a deeper significance, since it brings her into connection with the central action by passing the curse on to her. According to Snorri's paraphrase, Sigurd gives the ring to Brynhild when he goes to her in Gunnar's form.

For the rest of the story we must depend chiefly on *Gripisspa* and *Völsunga*. The latter tells that Grimhild, the mother of the Giukings, gave Sigurd a magic drink by which he forgot Brynhild and fell in love with Giuki's daughter. Gudrun's brothers swore oaths of friendship with him, and he agreed to ride through the waverlowe, or ring of fire, disguised and win Brynhild for the eldest brother Gunnar. After the two bridals, he remembered his first passing through the flame, and his love for Brynhild returned. The Shield-maiden too remembered, but thinking that Gunnar had fairly won her, accepted her fate until Gudrun in spite and jealousy revealed the trick that had been played on her. Of the treachery of the Giukings Brynhild takes little heed ; but death alone can pay for Sigurd's unconscious betrayal. She tells Gunnar that Sigurd has broken faith with him, and the Giukings with some reluctance murder their sister's husband. Brynhild springs on to the funeral pyre, and dies with Sigurd. *Völsunga* makes the murder take place in

Sigurd's chamber, and one poem, the *Short Sigurd Lay*, agrees. The fragment which follows *Sigrdrifumál*, on the other hand, places the scene in the open air :

"Sigurd was slain south of the Rhine ; a raven on a tree called aloud : 'On you will Atli redden the sword ; your broken oaths shall destroy you.' Gudrun Giuki's daughter stood without, and these were the first words she spoke : 'Where is now Sigurd, the lord of men, that my kinsmen ride first?' Högni alone made answer : 'We have hewn Sigurd asunder with the sword ; the grey horse still stoops over his dead lord.'"

This agrees with the *Old Gudrun Lay* and with the Continental German version, as a prose epilogue points out.

Of the Giuking brothers, Gunnar appears only in a contemptible light : he gains his bride by treachery, and keeps his oath to Sigurd by a quibble. Högni, who has little but his name in common with Hagen von Tronje of the *Nibelungen Lied*, advises Gunnar against breaking his oath, but it is he who taunts Gudrun afterwards. The later poems of the cycle try to make heroes out of both ; the same discrepancy exists between the first and second halves of the *Nibelungen Lied*. Their half-brother, Gutthorm, plays no part in the story except as the actual murderer of Sigurd.

The chief effect of the influences of Christianity and Romance on the legend is a loss of sympathy

with the heroic type of Brynhild, and an attempt to give more dignity to the figure of Gudrun. The Shield-maiden of divine origin and unearthly wisdom, with her unrelenting vengeance on her beloved, and her contempt for her slighter rival ("Fitter would it be for Gudrun to die with Sigurd, if she had a soul like mine"), is a figure out of harmony with the new religion, and beyond the comprehension of a time coloured by romance; while both the sentiment and the morality of the age would be on the side of Gudrun as the formally wedded wife. So the poem known as the *Short Sigurd Lay*, which has many marks of lateness, such as the elaborate description of the funeral pyre and the exaggeration of the signs of mourning, says nothing of Sigurd's love for Brynhild, nor do his last words to Gudrun give any hint of it. The *Nibelungen Lied* suppresses Sigurd's love to Brynhild, and the magic drink, and altogether lowers Brynhild, but elevates Gudrun (under her mother's name); her slow but terrible vengeance, and absolute forgetfulness of the ties of blood in pursuit of it, are equal to anything in the original version. The later heroic poems of the Edda make a less successful attempt to create sympathy for Gudrun; some, such as the so-called *First Gudrun Lay*, which is entirely romantic in character, try to make her pathetic by the abundance of tears she sheds; others, to make her heroic, though the result is only a spurious savagery.

The remaining poems of the cycle, all late in style and tone, deal with the fates of Gudrun and her brothers, and owe their existence to a narrator's unwillingness to let a favourite story end. The curse makes continuation easy, since the Giukings inherit it with the hoard. Gudrun was married at the wish of her kinsmen to Atli the Hun, said to be Brynhild's brother. He invited Gunnar and Högni to his court and killed them for the sake of the treasure, in vengeance for which Gudrun killed her own two sons and Atli; this latter incident being possibly an imitation of Signy. If we may believe that Gudrun, like Chriemhild in the *Nibelungen Lied*, married Atli in order to gain vengeance for Sigurd, we might suppose that there was confusion here: that she herself incited the murder of her brothers, and killed Atli when he had served his purpose. This would strengthen the part of Gudrun, who as the tale stands is rather a futile character. But in all probability the episode is due to a confusion of Signy's story with that of the German Chriemhild and Etzel.

One point has still to be considered: the place of the Nibelungs in the story. In the Edda, the Hniflungs are always the Giukings, Gunnar and Högni, and Snorri gives it as the name of an heroic family. The title of the first *aventiure* of the *Nibelungen Lied* also apparently uses the word of the Burgundians. Yet the treasure is always the

Nibelungs' hoard, which clearly means that they were the original owners; and when Hagen von Tronje tells the story later in the poem, he speaks of the Nibelungs correctly as the dwarfs from whom Siegfried won it. On this point, therefore, the German preserves the older tradition: the Norse Andvari, the river-dwarf, is the German Alberich the Nibelung. In the *Nibelungen Lied* the winning of the treasure forms no part of the action: it is merely narrated by Hagen. This accounts for the shortening of the episode and the omission of the intermediate steps: the robbing of the dwarf, the curse, and the dragon-slaying.

Ermanric.—The two poems of *Gudrun's Lament* and *Hamthismal*, in the Edda attached to the Volsung cycle, belong correctly to that of the Gothic hero Ermanric. According to these poems, Gudrun, Giuki's daughter, married a third time, and had three sons, Sörli, Hamthi and Erp. She married Svanhild, her own and Sigurd's daughter, to Jörmunrek, king of the Goths; but Svanhild was slandered, and her husband had her trodden to death by horses' hoofs. The description of Svanhild is a good example of the style of the romantic poems:

"The bondmaids sat round Svanhild, dearest of my children; Svanhild was like a glorious sunbeam in my hall. I dowered her with gold and goodly fabrics

when I married her into Gothland. That was the hardest of my griefs, when they trod Svanhild's fair hair into the dust beneath the horses' hoofs."

Gudrun sent her three sons to avenge their sister; two of them slew Erp by the way, and were killed themselves in their attack on Jörmunrek for want of his help. So died, as Snorri says, all who were of Giuking descent; and only Aslaug, daughter of Sigurd and Brynhild, survived. *Heimskringla*, a thirteenth century history of the royal races of Scandinavia, traces the descent of the Norse kings from her.

This Ermanric story, which belongs to legendary history rather than myth, is in reality quite independent of the Volsung or Nibelung cycle. The connection is loose and inartistic, the legend being probably linked to Gudrun's name because she had become a favourite character and Icelandic narrators were unwilling to let her die. The historic Ermanric was conquered by the Huns in 374; the sixth century historian Jornandes is the earliest authority for the tradition that he was murdered by Sarus and Ammius in revenge for their sister's death by wild horses. Saxo also tells the story, with greater similarity of names. It seems hardly necessary to assume, with many scholars, the existence of two heroes of the name Ermanric, an historic and a mythical one. A simpler explanation is that a legendary story

became connected with the name of a real personage. The slaying of Erp introduces a common folk-tale incident, familiar in stories like the *Golden Bird*, told by both Asbjørnsen and Grimm.

Helgi.—The Helgi-lays, three in number, are the best of the heroic poems. Nominally they tell two stories, Helgi Hjörvardsson being sandwiched between the two poems of Helgi Hundingsbane; but essentially the stories are the same.

In *Helgi Hjörvardsson*, Helgi, son of Hjörvard and Sigrinn, was dumb and nameless until a certain day when, while sitting on a howe, he saw a troop of nine Valkyries. The fairest, Svava, Eylimi's daughter, named him, and bidding him avenge his grandfather on Hrodmar (a former wooer of Sigrinn's, and her father's slayer), sent him to find a magic sword. Helgi slew Hrodmar and married Svava, having escaped from the sea-giantess Hrimgerd through the protection of his Valkyrie bride and the wit of a faithful servant. His brother Hedin, through the spells of a troll-wife, swore to wed Helgi's bride. Repenting, he told his brother, who, dying in a fight with Hrodmar's son, charged Svava to marry Hedin. A note by the collector adds "Helgi and Svava are said to have been born again."

In *Helgi Hundingsbane I.*, Helgi is the son of Sigmund and Borghild. He fought and slew

Hunding, and afterwards met in battle Hunding's sons at Logafell, where the Valkyrie Sigrun, Högni's daughter, protected him, and challenged him to fight Hödbrodd to whom her father had plighted her. She protected his ships in the storm which overtook them as they sailed to meet Hödbrodd, and watched over him in the battle, in which he slew his rival and was greeted as victor by Sigrun : " Hail, hero of Yngvi's race . . . thou shalt have both the red rings and the mighty maid : thine are Högni's daughter and Hringstad, the victory and the land."

Helgi Hundingsbane II., besides giving additional details of the hero's early life, completes the story. In the battle with Hödbrodd, Helgi killed all Sigrun's kinsmen except one brother, Dag, who slew him later in vengeance. But Helgi returned from the grave, awakened by Sigrun's weeping, and she went into the howe with him. The collector again adds a note : " Helgi and Sigrun are said to have been born again : he was then called Helgi Haddingjaskati, and she Kara Halfdan's daughter, as it is told in the *Kara-ljod*, and she was a Valkyrie."

This third Helgi legend does not survive in verse, the *Kara-ljod* having perished. It is told in prose in the late saga of Hromund Gripsson, according to which Kara was a Valkyrie and swan-maid : while she was hovering over Helgi, he killed her accidentally in swinging his sword.

There can be little doubt that these three are merely variants of the same story; the foundation is the same, though incidents and names differ. The three Helgis are one hero, and the three versions of his legend probably come from different localities. The collector could not but feel their identity, and the similarity was too fundamental to be overlooked; he therefore accounted for it by the old idea of re-birth, and thus linked the three together. In each Helgi has an hereditary foe (Hrodmar, Hunding, or Hadding); in each his bride is a Valkyrie, who protects him and gives him victory; each ends in tragedy, though differently.

The two variants in the Poetic Edda have evident marks of contamination with the Volsung cycle, and some points of superficial resemblance. Helgi Hjörvardsson's mother is Sigrlinn, Helgi Hundingsbane's father is Sigmund, as in the *Nibelungen Lied* Siegfried is the son of Sigemunt and Sigelint. Helgi Hundingsbane is a Volsung and Wolfing (Ylfing), and brother to Sinfjötli; his first fight, like Sigurd's, is against the race of Hunding; his rival, Hödbrodd, is a Hniflung; he first meets the Valkyrie on Loga-fell (Flame-hill); he is killed by his brother-in-law, who has sworn friendship. But there is no parallel to the essential features of the Volsung cycle, and such likenesses between the two stories as are not accidental are due to the influence of the more favoured legend; this is especially true

of the names. The prose-piece *Sinfjötli's Death* also makes Helgi half-brother to Sinfjötli ; it is followed in this by *Völsunga Saga*, which devotes a chapter to Helgi, paraphrasing *Helgi Hundingsbane I*. There is, of course, confusion over the Hunding episode ; the saga is obliged to reconcile its conflicting authorities by making Helgi kill Hunding and some of his sons, and Sigurd kill the rest.

If the theory stated below as to the original Helgi legend be correct, the feud with Hunding's race, as told in these poems, must be extraneous. I conjecture that it belonged originally to the Volsung cycle, and to the wer-wolf Sinfjötli. It must not be forgotten that, though he passes out of the Volsung story altogether in the later versions, both Scandinavian and German, he is in the main action in the earliest one (that in *Beowulf*), where even Sigurd does not appear. The feud might easily have been transferred from him to Helgi as well as to Sigurd, for invention is limited as regards episodes, and a narrator who wishes to elaborate the story of a favourite hero is often forced to borrow adventures. In the original story, Helgi's blood-feud was probably with the kindred of Sigrun or Svava.

The origin of the Helgi legend must be sought outside of the Volsung cycle. Some writers are of opinion that the name should be Holgi, and there are two stories in which a hero Holgi appears.

With the legend of Thorgerd Holgabrud, told by Saxo, who identified it with that of Helgi Hundingsbane, it has nothing in common; and the connection which has been sought with the legend of Holger Danske is equally difficult to establish. The essence of this latter story is the hero's disappearance into fairyland, and the expectation of his return sometime in the future: a motive which has been very fruitful in Irish romance, and in the traditions of Arthur, Tryggvason, and Barbarossa, among countless others. But it is absent from the Helgi poems; and the "old wives' tales" of Helgi's re-birth have nothing to do with his legend, but are merely a bookman's attempt to connect stories which he felt to be the same though different.

The essential feature of the story told in these poems is the motive familiar in that class of ballads of which the *Douglas Tragedy* is a type: the hero loves the daughter of his enemy's house, her kinsmen kill him, and she dies of grief. This is the story told in both the lays of *Helgi Hundingsbane*, complete in one, unfinished in the other. No single poem preserves all the incidents of the legend; some survive in one version, some in another, as usual in ballad literature.

Like Sinfjötli and Sigurd, Helgi is brought up in obscurity. He spends his childhood disguised in his enemy's household, and on leaving it, sends a message to tell his foes whom they have fostered.

They pursue him, and he is obliged, like Gude Wallace in the Scottish ballad, to disguise himself in a bondmaid's dress :

“Piercing are the eyes of Hagal's bondmaid ; it is no peasant's kin who stands at the mill : the stones are split, the bin springs in two. It is a hard fate for a warrior to grind the barley ; the sword-hilt is better fitted for those hands than the mill-handle.”

Sigrun is present at the battle, in which, as in the English and Scottish ballads, Helgi slays all her kindred except one brother. He tells her the fortunes of the fight, and she chooses between lover and kinsmen :

HELGI. “Good luck is not granted thee, maid, in all things, though the Norns are partly to blame. Bragi and Högni fell to-day at Frekastein, and I was their slayer ; . . . most of thy kindred lie low. Thou couldst not hinder the battle : it was thy fate to be a cause of strife to heroes. Weep not, Sigrun, thou hast been Hild to us ; heroes must meet their fate.”

SIGRUN. “I could wish those alive who are fallen, and yet rest in thy arms.”

The surviving brother, Dag, swears oaths of reconciliation to Helgi, but remembers the feud. The end comes, as in the Norse Sigmund tale, through Odin's interference : he lends his spear to Dag, who stabs Helgi in a grove, and rides home to tell his sister. Sigrun is inconsolable, and curses the murderer with a rare power and directness :

"May the oaths pierce thee that thou hast sworn to Helgi: . . . May the ship sail not that sails under thee, though a fair wind lie behind. May the horse run not that runs under thee, though thou art fleeing from thy foes. May the sword bite not that thou drawest, unless it sing round thine own head. If thou wert an outlaw in the woods, Helgi's death were avenged. . . . Never again while I live, by night or day, shall I sit happy at Sevafell, if I see not the light play on my hero's company, nor the gold-bitted War-breeze run thither with the warrior."

But Helgi returns from the grave, unable to rest because of Sigrun's weeping, and she goes down into the howe with him:

SIGRUN. "Thy hair is covered with frost, Helgi; thou art drenched with deadly dew, thy hands are cold and wet. How shall I get thee help, my hero?"

HELGI. "Thou alone hast caused it, Sigrun from Sevafell, that Helgi is drenched with deadly dew. Thou weapest bitter tears before thou goest to sleep, gold-decked, sunbright, Southern maid; each one falls on my breast, bloody, cold and wet, cruel, heavy with grief. . . ."

SIGRUN. "I have made thee here a painless bed, Helgi, son of the Wolfings. I will sleep in thy arms, my warrior, as if thou wert alive."

HELGI. "There shall be no stranger thing at Sevafell, early or late, than that thou, king-born, Högni's fair daughter, shouldst be alive in the grave and sleep in a dead man's arms."

The lay of Helgi Hjörvardsson is furthest from the original, for there is no feud with Svava's kindred, nor does Helgi die at their hands; but it

preserves a feature omitted elsewhere, in his leaving his bride to his brother's protection. Like the wife in the English ballad of *Earl Brand*, and the heroine of the Danish *Ribold and Guldborg*, Svava refuses, but Hedin's last words seem to imply that he is to return and marry her after avenging Helgi. This would be contrary to all parallels, according to which Svava should die with Helgi.

The alternative ending of the *Helgi and Kara* version is interesting as providing the possible source of another Scottish ballad dealing with the same type of story. In *The Cruel Knight*, as here, the hero slays his bride, who is of a hostile family, by mistake. One passage of *Helgi Hundingsbane II.* describes Helgi's entrance into Valhalla, which, taken with the incident of Sigrun's joining him in the howe, supplies an instance of the survival side by side of inconsistent notions as to the state of the dead. The lover's return from the grave is the subject of *Clerk Saunders* (the second part) and several other Scottish ballads.

The Song of the Mill.—The magic mill is best known in the folk-tale, "Why the sea is salt"; but this is not the oldest part of the story, though it took most hold of the popular imagination which loves legendary explanations of natural phenomena. The hero, Frodi, a mythical

Danish king, is the northern Croesus. His reign was marked by a world-peace, and the peace, the wealth, the liberality of Frodi became proverbial. The motive of his tale is again the curse that follows gold. It is told by Snorri, in whose work *Grottasöngur* is embodied.

Frodi possessed two magic quern-stones, from which the grinder could grind out whatever he wished ; but he had no one strong enough to turn them until he bought in Sweden two bondmaids of giant-race, Menja and Fenja. He set them to grind at the quern by day, and by night when all slept, and as they ground him gold, and peace, and prosperity, they sang :

“We grind wealth for Frodi, all bliss we grind, and abundance of riches in the fortunate bin. May he sit on wealth, may he sleep on down, may he wake to delight ; then the grinding were good. Here shall no man hurt another, prepare evil nor work death, nor hew with the keen sword though he find his brother’s slayer bound.”

But when they wearied of their toil and asked for a little rest, Frodi answered : “Ye shall sleep no longer than the cuckoo is silent, or while I speak one stave.” Then the giant-maids grew angry, and sang :

“Thou wert not wise, Frodi, in buying thy bondmaids : thou didst choose us for our strength and size but asked not our race. Bold were Hrungni and his father, and mightier Thiazi ; Iði and Orni were our

ancestors, from them are we daughters of the mountain-giants sprung. . . . We maids wrought mighty deeds, we moved the mountains from their places, we rolled rocks over the court of the giants, so that the earth shook. . . . Now we are come to the king's house, meeting no mercy and held in bondage, mud beneath our feet and cold over our heads, we grind the Peace-maker. It is dreary at Frodi's."

As they sang of their wrongs by night, their mood changed, and instead of grinding peace and wealth, they ground war, fire and sword :

"Waken, Frodi ! waken, Frodi ! if thou wilt hear our songs. . . . I see fire burn at the east of the citadel, the voice of war awakes, the signal is given. A host will come hither in speed, and burn the hall over the king."

So the bondmaids ground on in giant-wrath, while the sea-king Mysing sailed nearer with his host, until the quern-stones split ; and then the daughters of the mountain-giants spoke once more : " We have ground to our pleasure, Frodi ; we maids have stood long at the mill."

A Norseman was rarely content to allow a fortunate ending to any hero, and a continuation of the story therefore makes the mill bring disaster on Mysing also. After slaying Frodi and burning his hall, he took the stones and the bondmaids on board his ship, and bade them grind salt. They ground till the weight sank the ship to the bottom of the sea, where the mill is grinding still. This is not in the song, though it has lived longer popularly

than the earlier part. Dr. Rydberg identifies Frodi with Frey, the God of fertility.

The Everlasting Battle.—No Eddic poem survives on the battle of the Hjathnings, the story of which is told in prose by Snorri. It must, however, be an ancient legend; and the hero Hedin belongs to one of the old Germanic heroic races, for the minstrel Deor is a dependent of the Heodenings in the Old English poem to which reference will be made later. The legend is that Hild, daughter of Högni, was carried away by Hedin the Hjathning, Hjarrandi's son. Högni pursued, and overtook them near the Orkneys. Then Hild went to her father and offered atonement from Hedin, but said also that he was quite ready to fight, and Högni need expect no mercy. Högni answered shortly, and Hild returning told Hedin that her father would accept no atonement but bade him prepare to fight. Both kings landed on an island, followed by their men. Hedin called to Högni and offered atonement and much gold, but Högni said it was too late, his sword was already drawn. They fought till evening, and then returned to their ships; but Hild went on shore and woke up all the slain by sorcery, so that the battle began again next day just as before. Every day they fight, and every night the dead are recalled to life, and so it will go on till Ragnarök.

In the German poem, *Gudrun*, the Continental version of this legend occurs in the story of the second Hilde. She is carried away by the minstrel Horant (who thus plays a more active part than the Norse Hjarrandi), as envoy from King Hettel, Hedin's German counterpart. Her father Hagen pursues, and after a battle with Hettel agrees to a reconciliation. The story is duplicated in the abduction of Hilde's daughter Gudrun, and the battle on the Wülpensand.

Another reference may probably be supplied by the much debated lines 14-16 from the Anglo-Saxon *Deor*, of which the most satisfactory translation seems to be: "Many of us have heard of the harm of Hild; the Jute's loves were unbounded, so that the care of love took from him sleep altogether." Saxo, it is true, makes Hild's father a Jute, instead of her lover, and Snorri apparently agrees with him in making Hedin Norwegian; but in the *Gudrun* Hettel is Frisian or Jutish. The Anglo-Saxon *Widsith* mentions in one line Hagena, king of the Holmrygas (a Norwegian province), and Heoden, king of the Glommas (not identified), who may be the Högni and Hedin of this tale.

The Anglo-Saxon and German agree on another point where both differ from the Norse. The Anglo-Saxon poem *Deor* is supposed to be spoken by a *scop* or court poet who has been ousted from the favour of his lord, a Heodenig, by Heorrenda,

another singer: "Once I was the Heodenings' scop, dear to my lord: Deor was my name. Many a year I had a good service and a gracious lord, until the song-skilled Heorrenda received the rights which the protector of men once granted me." Like Heorrenda, Horant in the *Gudrun* is a singer in the service of the Heathnings. The Norse version keeps the name, and its connection with the Heathnings, but gives Hjarrandi, as the hero's father, no active part to play. In both points, arguing from the probable Frisian origin of the story, the Anglo-Saxon and German are more likely to have the correct form.

The legend is, like those of Walter and Hildigund, Helgi and Sigrun, founded on the primary instincts of love and war. In the Norse story of the Heathnings, however, the former element is almost eliminated. It is from no love to Hedin that Hild accompanies him, though Saxo would have it so. Nothing is clearer than that strife is her only object. It is her mediation which brings about the battle, when apparently both heroes would be quite willing to make peace; and her arts which cause the daily renewal of fighting. This island battle among dead and living is peculiar to the Norse version, and coloured by, if not originating in, the Valhalla idea: Högni and Hedin and their men are the Einherjar who fight every day and rest and feast at night, Hild is a war-goddess

The conception of her character, contrasting with the gentler part played by the Continental German heroines (who are rather the causes than the inciters of strife), can be paralleled from many of the sagas proper.

Högni's sword Dainsleif, forged by the dwarfs, as were all magic weapons, is like the sword of Angantyr, in that it claims a victim whenever it is drawn from the sheath : an idea which may easily have arisen from the prowess of any famous swordsman.

The Sword of Angantyr.—Like the two last legends, Angantyr's story is not represented in the Elder Edda ; it is not even told by Snorri. Yet poems belonging to the cycle survive (preserved by good fortune in the late mythical *Hervarar Saga*) which among the heroic poems rank next in artistic beauty to the Helgi Lays. Since the story possesses besides a striking originality, and is connected with the name of a Pan-Germanic hero, the Ongendtheow of Old English poetry, I cannot follow the example of most editors and omit it from the heroic poems.

Like the Volsung legend it is the story of a curse ; and there is a general similarity of outline, with the exception that the hero is in this case a woman. The curse-laden treasure is here the sword Tyrping, which Svafrlami got by force from

the dwarfs. They laid a curse on it : that it should bring death to its bearer, no wound it made should be healed, and it should claim a victim whenever it was unsheathed. In the saga, the story is spread over several generations : partly, no doubt, in order to include varying versions ; partly also in imitation of the true Icelandic family saga. The chief actors in the legend, beside the sword, are Angantyr and his daughter Hervör.

The earlier history of Tyrting is told in the saga. Svafrlami is killed, with the magic weapon itself, by the viking Arngrim, who thus gains possession of it ; when he is slain in his turn, it descends to Angantyr, the eldest of his twelve berserk sons. For a while no one can withstand them, but the doom overtakes them at last in the battle of Samsey against the Swedes Arrow-Odd and Hjalmar. In berserk-rage, the twelve brothers attack the Swedish ships, and slay every man except the two leaders who have landed on the island. The battle over, the berserks go ashore, and there when their fury is past, they are attacked by the two Swedish champions. Odd fights eleven of the brothers, but Hjalmar has the harder task in meeting Angantyr and his sword. All the twelve sons of Arngrim fall, and Hjalmar is mortally wounded by Tyrting. The survivor buries his twelve foemen where they fell, and takes his comrade's body back to Sweden. The first poem gives the challenge

of the Swedish champions, and Hjalmar's dying song.

Hervör, the daughter of Angantyr, is in some respects a female counterpart of Sigurd. Like him, she is born after her father's death, and brought up in obscurity. When she learns her father's name, she goes forth without delay to claim her inheritance from the dead, even with the curse that goes with it. Here the second poem begins. On reaching the island where her father fell, she asks a shepherd to guide her to the graves of Arngrim's sons :

"I will ask no hospitality, for I know not the islanders ; tell me quickly, where are the graves called Hjörvard's howes ?"

He is unwilling : "The man is foolish who comes here alone in the dark shade of night : fire is flickering, howes are opening, field and fen are aflame," and flees into the woods, but Hervör is dauntless and goes on alone. She reaches the howes, and calls on the sons of Arngrim :

"Awake, Angantyr ! Hervör calls thee, only daughter to thee and Tofa. Give me from the howe the keen sword which the dwarfs forged for Svafrlami, Hervard, Hjörvard, Hrani, Angantyr ! I call you all from below the tree-roots, with helm and corselet, with sharp sword, shield and harness, and reddened spear."

Angantyr denies that the sword is in his howe : "Neither father, son, nor other kinsmen buried me ; my slayers had Tyrting ;" but Hervör does

not believe him. "Tell me but truth. . . . Thou art slow to give thine only child her heritage." He tries to frighten her back to the ships by describing the sights she will see, but she only cries again, "Give me Hjalmar's slayer from the howe, Angantyr!"

A. "Hjalmar's slayer lies under my shoulders; it is all wrapped in fire; I know no maid on earth who dare take that sword in her hands."

H. "I will take the sharp sword in my hands, if I can get it: I fear no burning fire, the flame sinks as I look on it."

A. "Foolish art thou, Hervör the fearless, to rush into the fire open-eyed. I will rather give thee the sword from the howe, young maid; I cannot refuse thee."

H. "Thou dost well, son of vikings, to give me the sword from the howe. I think its possession better than to win all Norway."

Her father warns her of the curse, and the doom that the sword will bring, and she leaves the howes followed by his vain wish: "Would that I could give thee the lives of us twelve, the strength and energy that we sons of Arngrim left behind us!"

It is unnecessary here to continue the story as the saga does, working out the doom over later generations; over Hervör's son Heidrek, who forfeited his head to Odin in a riddle-contest, and over his children, another Angantyr, Hlod, and a second Hervör. The verse sources for this latter part are very corrupt.

A full discussion of the relation between the Eddic and the Continental versions of the heroic tales summarised in the foregoing pages would, of course, be far beyond the scope of this study ; the utmost that can be done in that direction is to suggest a few points. Three of the stories are not concerned in this section : Helgi and Frodi are purely Scandinavian cycles ; while though Angantyr is a well-known heroic name (in *Widsith* Ongendtheow is king of the Swedes), the legend attached to his name in the Norse sources does not survive elsewhere. The Weland cycle is perhaps common property. None of the versions localise it, for the names in *Völundarkvida*, Wolfdale, Myrkwood, &c., are conventional heroic place-names. It was popular at a very early date in England, and is probably a Pan-Germanic legend. The Sigurd and Hild stories, on the contrary, are both, in all versions, localised on the Continent, the former by the Rhine, the latter in Friesland or Jutland ; both, therefore, in Low German country, whence they must have spread to the other Germanic lands. To England they were doubtless carried by the Low German invaders of the sixth century. On the question of their passage to the North there are wide differences of opinion. Most scholars agree that there was an earlier and a later passage, the first taking Hild, Ermanric, and the Volsung story ; the second, about the twelfth or thirteenth century, the

Volsungs again, with perhaps Dietrich and Attila. But there is much disagreement as to the date of the first transmission. Müllenhoff put it as early as 600; Konrad Maurer, in the ninth and tenth centuries; while Dr. Golther is of opinion that the Volsung story passed first to the vikings in France, and then westward over Ireland to Iceland; therefore also not before the ninth century. Such evidence as is afforded by the very slight English references makes it probable that the Scandinavians had the tales later than the English, a view supported by the more highly developed form of the Norse version, and, in the case of the Volsung cycle, its greater likeness to the Continental German. The earliest Norse references which can be approximately dated are in the Skald Bragi (first half of the ninth century), who knew all three stories: the Hild and Ermanric tales he gives in outline; his only reference to the Volsungs is a kenning, "the Volsungs' drink," for serpent. With the possible exception of the Anglo-Saxon fragments, the Edda preserves on the whole the purest versions of those stories which are common to all, though, as might be expected, the Continental sources sometimes show greater originality in isolated details. These German sources have entangled the different cycles into one involved mass; but in the Norse the extraneous elements are easily detached.

The motives of heroic tales are limited in number, and more or less common to different races. Heroic cycles differ as a rule merely in their choice or combination of incidents, not in the nature of their material. The origin of these heroic motives may generally be found in primitive custom or conditions of life, seized by an imaginative people and woven into legend; sometimes linked to the name of some dead tribal hero, just as the poets of a later date wound the same traditions in still-varying combinations round the names of Grettir Asmundarson and Gold-Thori; though often the hero is, like the Gods, born of the myth. In the latter case, the story is pure myth; in the former it is legend, or a mixture of history and legend, as in the Ermanric and Dietrich tales, which have less interest for the mythologist.

The curse-bringing treasure, one of the most fruitful Germanic motives, probably has its origin in the custom of burying a dead man's possessions with him. In the *Waterdale Saga*, Ketil Raum, a viking of the eighth and early ninth centuries, reproaches his son Thorstein as a degenerate, in that he expects to inherit his father's wealth, instead of winning fortune for himself: "It used to be the custom with kings and earls, men of our kind, that they won for themselves fortune and fame; wealth was not counted as a heritage, nor would sons inherit from their fathers, but rather

lay their possessions in the howe with them." It is easy to see that when this custom came into conflict with the son's natural desire to inherit, the sacrosanctity of the dead man's treasure and of his burial-mound would be their only protection against violation. The fear of the consequences of breaking the custom took form in the myth of the curse, as in the sword of Angantyr and the Nibelungs' hoard; while the dangers attending the violation of the howe were personified in the dragon-guardian. In *Gold-Thori's Saga*, the dead berserks whose howe Thori enters, are found guarding their treasure in the shape of dragons; while Thori himself is said to have turned into a dragon after death.

Marriage with alien wives, which in the case of the Mastermaid story has been postulated as means of transmission and as the one possible explanation of its nearly universal diffusion, may perhaps with more simplicity be assumed as the common basis in custom for independently arising myths of this type. The attempts of the bride's kindred to prevent the marriage, and of the bridegroom's to undo it, would be natural incidents in such a story, and the magic powers employed by and against the bride would be the mythical representatives of the mutually unfamiliar customs of alien tribes. This theory at least offers a credible explanation of the hero's temporary oblivion of or unfaithfulness

to his protectress, after their successful escape together.

In the Valkyrie-brides, Brynhild and Sigrun, with their double attributes of fighting and wisdom, there is an evident connexion with the Germanic type of woman preserved in the allusions of Cæsar and Tacitus, which reaches its highest development in the heroines of the Edda. Any mythical or ideal conception of womanhood combines the two primitive instincts, love and fighting, even though the woman may be only the innocent cause of strife, or its passive prize. The peculiarity of the Germanic representation is that the woman is never passive, but is herself the incarnation of both instincts. Even if she is not a Valkyrie, nor taking part herself in the fight, she is ready, like the wives of the Cimbri, to drive the men back to the battle from which they have escaped. Hild and Hervör are at one extreme: war is their spiritual life. Love is in Hild nothing more than instinct; in Hervör it is not even that: she would desire nothing from marriage beyond a son to inherit the sword. At the other extreme is Sigrun, who has the warlike instinct, but is spiritually a lover as completely and essentially as Isolde or Juliet. The interest in Signy lies in the way in which she sacrifices what are usually considered the strongest feminine instincts, without, however, by any means abandoning them, to her uncompromis-

ing revenge and pride of race. Her pride in her son seems to include something of both trains of feeling; and she dies with the husband she detests, simply because he is her husband. Brynhild, lastly, is a highly modern type, as independent in love as in war. It is impossible to imagine Sigrun, or Wagner's Sieglinde, taking her revenge on a faithless lover; from no lack of spirit, but simply because revenge would have given no comfort to either. To Brynhild it is not only a distinct relief, but the only endurable end; she can forgive when she is avenged.

The other motives of these stories may be briefly enumerated. The burning of Brynhild and Signy, and Sigrun's entrance into the howe, are mythical reminiscences of widow-burial. The "sister's son" is preserved in the Sigmund and Sinfjötli tale, which also has a trace of animism in the werwolf episode. The common swanmaid motive occurs in two, the Völund story and the legend of Helgi and Kara; while the first Helgi tale suggests the Levirate in the proposed marriage of Svava to her husband's brother. The waverlowe of the Volsung myth may be traced back to the midsummer fires; the wooing of Brynhild by Sigurd's crossing the fire would thus, like the similar bridal of Menglad and Svipdag and the winning of Gerd for Frey, be based on the marriages which formed a part of agricultural rites.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

To avoid confusion, and in view of the customary loose usage of the word "saga," it may be as well to state that it is here used only in its technical sense of a prose history.

VÖLUND. (Pages 5 to 8.)

Dr. Rydberg formulates a theory identifying Völund with Thiazi, the giant who carried off Idunn. It is based chiefly on arguments from names and other philological considerations, and gives perhaps undue weight to the authority of Saxo. It is difficult to see any fundamental likenesses in the stories.

The Old English references to Weland are in the *Waldere* fragment and the *Lament of Deor*. For the Franks Casket, see Professor Napier's discussion, with photographs, in the *English Miscellany* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1901). The *Thidreks Saga* (sometimes called *Vilkinsa Saga*), was edited by Unger (Christiania, 1853), and by Hylten-Cavallius (1880). There are two German translations: by Rassmann (*Heldensage*, 1863), and by Von der Hagen (*Nordische Heldenromane*, 1873).

THE VOLSUNGS. (Pages 8 to 27.)

As divided in most editions the poems connected with the Volsung cycle, including the two on Ermanric, are fifteen in number:

Gripisspa.

Reginmal, Fafnismal, Sigdrifumal, a continued narrative compiled from different sources.

Sigurd Fragment, on the death of Sigurd.

First Gudrun Lay, on Gudrun's mourning, late.

Short Sigurd Lay (called *Long Brynhild Lay* in the *Corpus Poeticum*; sometimes called *Third Sigurd Lay*); style late.

Brynhild's Hellride, a continuation of the preceding.

Second, or Old, Gudrun Lay, is also late. It contains more kennings than are usual in Eddic poetry, and the picture of Gudrun's sojourn in Denmark and the tapestry she wrought with Thora Halfdan's daughter, together with the descriptions of her suitors, belong to a period which had a taste for colour and elaboration of detail.

Third Gudrun Lay, or the *Ordeal of Gudrun* (after her marriage to Atli), is romantic in character. The Gothic hero Thjodrek (Dietrich) is introduced.

Oddrun's Lament, in which Gunnar's death is caused by an intrigue with Atli's sister Oddrun, marks the disintegration of the Volsung legend.

The two Atli Lays (*Atlakvida* and *Atlamal*, the latter of Greenland origin), deal with the death of Gunnar and Högni, and Gudrun's vengeance on Atli.

Gudrun's Lament and *Hamthismal* belong to the Ermanric cycle.

VOLSUNG PARAPHRASES. (Page 11.)

Skaldskaparmal, Völsunga Saga and *Norna-Gests Thattr* (containing another short paraphrase) are all included in Dr. Wilken's *Die Prosaische Edda* (Paderborn, 1878). There is an English version of *Völsunga* by Magnusson and Morris (London, 1870) and a German version of *Völsunga* and *Norna-Gest* by Edzardi.

NIBELUNGENLIED. (Page 11.)

Editions by Bartsch (Leipzig, 1895) and Zarncke (Halle, 1899) ; translation into modern German by Simrock. *Handwritten: J. and S. 1899*

SIGNY AND SIGGEIR. (Page 13.) *Handwritten: N.C. 1899*

Saxo Grammaticus (Book vii.) tells the story of a Signy, daughter of Sigar, whose lover Hagbard, after slaying her brothers, wins her favour. Sigar in vengeance had him strangled on a hill in view of Signy's windows, and she set fire to her house that she might die simultaneously with her lover. The antiquity of part at least of this story is proved by the kenning "Hagbard's collar" for halter, in a poem probably of the tenth century. On the other hand, a reference in *Völsunga Saga*, that "Haki and Hagbard were great and famous men, yet Sigar carried off their sister, . . . and they were slow to vengeance," shows that there is confusion somewhere. It seems possible that Hagbard's story has been contaminated with a distorted account of the Volsung Signy, civilised as usual by Saxo, with an effect of vulgarity absent from the primitive story.

In a recently published pamphlet by Mr. W. W. Lawrence and Dr. W. H. Schofield (*The First Riddle of Cynewulf and Signy's Lament*. Baltimore: The Modern Language Association of America. 1902) it is suggested that the so-called First Riddle in the Exeter Book is in reality an Anglo-Saxon translation of a Norse "Complaint" spoken by the Volsung Signy. Evidence from metre and form is all in favour of this view, and the poem bears the interpretation without any straining of the meaning. Dr. Schofield's second contention, that the poem thus interpreted is evidence for the theory of a British origin for the Eddic poems, is not equally convincing. The existence in Anglo-Saxon of a translation from the Norse is no proof that any of the Eddic poems, or even the

original Norse "Signy's Lament" postulated by Dr. Schofield, were composed in the West.

It seems unnecessary to suppose, with Dr. Schofield, an influence of British legend on the Volsung story. The points in which the story of Sigmund resembles that of Arthur and differs from that of Theseus prove nothing in the face of equally strong points of correspondence between Arthur and Theseus which are absent from the Volsung story.

SINFJÖTLI'S DEATH. (Page 14.)

Münch (*Nordmændenes Gudeleere*, Christiania, 1847) ingeniously identified the old man with Odin, come in person to conduct Sinfjötli to Valhalla, since he would otherwise have gone to Hel, not having fallen in battle; a stratagem quite in harmony with Odin's traditional character.

SIGMUND AND SINFJÖTLI. (Page 15.)

It seems probable, on the evidence of *Beowulf*, that Sigmund and Sinfjötli represent the Pan-Germanic stage of the national-hero, and Sigurd or Siegfried the Continental stage. Possibly Helgi may then be the Norse race-hero. Sigurd was certainly foreign to Scandinavia; hence the epithet Hunnish, constantly applied to him, and the localising of the legend by the Rhine. The possibility suggests itself that the Brynhild part of the story, on the other hand, is of Scandinavian origin, and thence passed to Germany. It is at least curious that the *Nibelungen Lied* places Prunhilt in Iceland.

WAGNER AND THE VOLSUNG CYCLE. (Page 26.)

Wagner's *Ring des Nibelungen* is remarkable not only for the way in which it reproduces the spirit of both the Sinfjötli and the Sigurd traditions, but also for the wonderful instinct which chooses the best and most

primitive features of both Norse and Continental versions. Thus he keeps the dragon of the Norse, the Nibelungs of the German; preserves the wildness of the old Sigmund tale, and substitutes the German Hagen for his paler Norse namesake; restores the original balance between the parts of Brynhild and Gudrun; gives the latter character, and an active instead of a passive function in the story, by assigning to her her mother's share in the action; and by substituting for the slaying of the otter the bargain with the Giants for the building of Valhalla, makes the cause worthy of the catastrophe.

ERMANRIC. (Page 27.)

For examples of legend becoming attached to historical names, see Tylor's *Primitive Culture*.

THE HELGI LAYS. (Page 29.)

The Helgi Lays stand before the Volsung set in the MS.; I treat them later for the sake of greater clearness.

HELGI AND KARA. (Page 30.)

Hromundar Saga Gripssonar, in which this story is given, is worthless as literature, and has not been recently edited. P. E. Müller's *Sagabibliothek*, in which it was published, is out of print. Latin and Swedish translations may be found in Björner's *Nordiske Kämpa Dater* (Stockholm, 1737), also out of print.

REBIRTH. (Page 31.)

Dr. Storm has an interesting article on the Norse belief in Re-birth in the *Arkiv for Nordisk Filologi*, ix. He collects instances, and among other arguments points out the Norse custom of naming a posthumous child after its dead father as a probable relic of the belief. The inheritance of luck may perhaps be another survival; a notable

instance occurs in *Viga-Glums Saga*, where the warrior Vigfus bequeaths his luck to his favourite grandson, Glum. In the *Waterdale Saga* there are two instances in which it is stated that the luck of the dead grandfather will pass to the grandson who receives his name. Scholars do not, however, agree as to the place of the rebirth idea in the Helgi poems, some holding the view that it is an essential part of the story.

HUNDING. (Page 32.)

It is possible that the werewolf story is a totem survival. If so, the Hunding feud might easily belong to it: dogs are the natural enemies of wolves. It is curious that the Irish werewolf Cormac has a feud with MacCon (*i.e.*, Son of a Dog), which means the same as Hunding. This story, which has not been printed, will be found in the Bodleian MS. Laud, 610.

THORGERD HOLGABRUD. (Page 33.)

Told in Saxo, Book ii. Snorri has a bare allusion to it.

HOLGER DANSKE, OR OGIER LE DANOIS. (Page 33.)

See *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, vol. i. p. cxxx., and No. 10 of this series. The Norse version of the story (Helgi Thorisson) is told in the Saga of Olaf Tryggvason, and is summarised by Dr. Rydberg in the *Teutonic Mythology*, and by Mr. Nutt in the *Voyage of Bran*.

BALLADS. (Page 36.)

Professor Child is perhaps hasty in regarding the two parts of *Clerk Saunders* as independent. The first part, though unlike the Helgi story in circumstance, seems to preserve the tradition of the hero's hostility to his bride's kindred, and his death at their hands.

The Helgi story, in all its variants, is as familiar in

Danish as in Border ballads. The distribution of the material in Iceland, Denmark, England and Scotland is strongly in favour of the presumption that Scandinavian legend influenced England and Scotland, and against the presumption that the poems in question passed from the British Isles to Iceland. The evidence of the Danish ballads should be conclusive on this point. There is an English translation of the latter by R. C. A. Prior (*Ancient Danish Ballads*, London, 1860).

THE EVERLASTING BATTLE. (Page 39.)

The Skald Bragi (before 850 A.D.) has a poem on this subject, given with a translation in the *Corpus*, vol. ii. Saxo's version is in the fifth book of his History. According to Bragi, Hild has a necklace, which has caused comparison of this story with that of the Greek Eriphyle. Irish legendary history describes a similar battle in which the slain revive each night and renew the fight daily, as occurring in the wanderings of the Tuatha De Danann before they reached Ireland. According to Keating, they learnt the art of necromancy in the East, and taught it to the Danes.

The latest edition of the *Gudrun* is by Ernst Martin (second edition, Halle, 1902). There is a modern German translation by Simrock.

ANGANTYR. (Page 42.)

The poems of this cycle are four in number—(1) *Hjalmar's Death-song*; (2) *Angantyr and Hervör*; (3) *Heidrek's Riddle-Poem*; (4) *Angantyr the Younger and Ilod*. All are given in the first volume of the *Corpus*, with translations.

Hervarar Saga was published by Rafn (Copenhagen, 1829-30) in *Fornaldur Sögur*, vol. i., now out of print. It has been more recently edited by Dr. Bugge, together with *Völsunga* and others. Petersen (Copenhagen, 1847) edited

it with a Danish translation. Munch's *Nordmaendenes Gudelære* (out of print) contains a short abstract.

DEATH OF ANGANTYR. (Page 43.)

Angantyr's death is related by Saxo, Book v., with entire exclusion of all mythical interest.

TRANSMISSION OF LEGENDS. (Page 47.)

Müllenhoff's views are given in the *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum*, vol. x. ; Maurer's in the *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, vol. ii. For Golther's views on the Volsung cycle see *Germania*, 33.

THE DRAGON MYTH. (Page 49.)

See also Hartland, *Science of Fairy-Tales*.

The eating of the dragon's heart (see p. 19) may possibly be a survival of the custom of eating a slain enemy's heart to obtain courage, of which Dr. Frazer gives examples in the *Golden Bough*.

ALIEN WIVES. (Page 49.)

For the theory of alien wives as a means of transmission, see Lang, *Custom and Myth* (London, 1893).

THE SISTER'S SON. (Page 51.)

See Mr. Gummere's article in the *English Miscellany* ; and Professor Rhys' Presidential Address to the Anthropological Section of the British Association, 1900. The double relationship between Sigmund and Sinfjötli (not uncommon in heroic tales ; compare Conchobhar and Cuchulainn, Arthur and Mordred) seems in this case due to the same cause as the custom which prevailed in the dynasty of the Ptolemies, where the king often married his sister, that his heir might be of the pure royal blood.

SWANMAIDS. (Page 51.)

See Hartland, *Science of Fairy-Tales*.

THE WAVERLOWE. (Page 51.)

Dr. Frazer (*Golden Bough*) gives instances of ritual marriages connected with the midsummer fires. For *Svipdag and Menglad*, see Study No. 12 of this series. If Rydberg, as seems very probable, is right in identifying Menglad and Svipdag with Freyja and the mortal lover who wins her and whom she afterwards loses, the story would be a parallel to those of Venus and Adonis, Ishtar and Tammuz, &c., which Frazer derives from the ritual marriage of human sacrifices to the Goddess of fertility. The reason given in the Edda for Brynhild's sleep, and her connexion with Odin, are secondary, arising from the Valhalla myth.

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The Legends of The Holy Grail

By

Alfred Nutt

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Sign of the Phœnix, Long Acre, London

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PREFACE

THE present study follows the lines of my previous work upon the subject: "Studies on the Legend of the Holy Grail, with special reference to the hypothesis of its Celtic Origin, 1888," in so far as I first lay before the reader the *facts* in the shape of brief summaries of the romances, and then endeavour to interpret these facts in the most natural and unforced manner. Limits of space have compelled me to cite only the salient, absolutely essential facts, to disregard many secondary points on which I dwelt fully in my 1888 work, and to discard absolutely all polemic against other investigators of the Grail literature. I may say briefly that the conclusions to which I came in 1888 have, in the main, been strengthened by the subsequent course of research, in especial by the work of Miss Weston, to whom are due the most pregnant and illuminating suggestions in the field of Arthurian study during the last ten years, and whom I must thank for reading the proofs of the following pages and for many valuable remarks.

In the Bibliographical Appendix I have only cited such books and articles as have appeared since 1888, with which the serious student of the cycle needs to make himself acquainted. For Grail literature prior to 1888 I refer, in so far as it is not cited in the Appendix, to my previous work.

ALFRED NUTT.

THE HOLY GRAIL

IN Number 1 of these studies I sketched the historical and social conditions which determined the great outburst of romantic literature in the twelfth century. In Number 4 Miss Weston enumerated the chief themes and incidents, the combination of which makes up the Arthurian cycle, the most prominent and characteristic example of the mediæval romantic spirit. One section of the Arthurian cycle, that which comprises a number of stories describing the search after, and the history of, a mysterious object known as the Grail, or the Holy Grail, she left on one side. Although now inextricably bound up with the Arthur legend as a whole, the connection is late and secondary. In part, at least, the Grail stories were originally independent of the Arthur cycle, and they present a series of problems differing, in a marked degree, from those involved in the consideration of the other Arthurian romances, and necessitating separate investigation.

Much unnecessary mystery has accumulated around the Grail stories, and they have become

the happy hunting ground of mystical enthusiasts. There are good reasons why this should be so. In the first place, whatever be the interpretation placed upon a certain sequence of incidents which recurs repeatedly and in varying forms in these stories, it undoubtedly described from the first a search for wonder-working talismans, the possession of which constituted, in a measure, a *summum bonum* ; in the second, this fact was apparent to several mediæval writers who have left us their version of the Grail quest, expressed in the terms of mediæval Christian mysticism ; thirdly, and this is perhaps the chief reason, several of the Grail stories, and notably one of the oldest and most important, have come down to us in an unfinished or fragmentary form. We cannot be sure how this or that writer conceived the story as a whole, or in what sense he figured the Grail to himself.

Thus we have the primary and essential element of mystery inherent in every story which sets forth a quest for that which transcends the ordinary conditions of human life ; we have the secondary, but also essential, element of mediæval mystical interpretation ; finally, we have the purely accidental element of fragmentary and enigmatic presentation. It is not surprising if, under these circumstances, so much nonsense has been written about the Grail.

The chief cause which has led many able, learned,

and ingenious men to spin idle theories deserves a moment's consideration. In the immense and confused mass of the Grail romances some particular fact or set of facts has been picked out, isolated from its setting, and interpreted without reference to the romances as a whole. The only way to avoid this error is to survey, however briefly, all the essential facts, and to arrange them in the order of their development. To understand how these stories came to assume their present shape is to be near understanding what they originally meant.

The Grail romances, of which I propose to enumerate, succinctly but sufficiently, the leading themes, incidents, and sequences of incident, may be divided into two main classes. In the first, the chief stress is laid upon the adventures connected with the quest for certain talismans, of which the Grail is only one, and upon the personality of the hero who achieves the quest; in the second, upon the nature and history of these talismans. The first may be styled the Quest, the second the Early History versions; but these designations must not be taken as implying that either class is solely concerned with one aspect of the legend.

FIRST CLASS: QUEST VERSIONS.

Chief among these is the vast poetic compilation known as the *Conte del Graal*. This mass of

over 60,000 verses came into existence between 1180 and 1235, or 1240, but we can only date with any accuracy the section which extends from v. 1283 to v. 10,601, and is the work of the most celebrated French poet of the twelfth century, Crestien de Troies, who began to write about 1150, has left a number of romances, mostly belonging to the Arthur cycle, and who died about 1181. He himself states that he took the story from a book given him by a Count Philip of Flanders, who died, Crusading, in 1191, after having been Regent of France in 1180-81.

Conte del Graal: Crestien.—Perceval is brought up by his mother in the forest to which she has retired. Purposely kept in ignorance of all that relates to chivalry and warfare, he one day meets and questions a band of passing knights. Neither the warnings nor the entreaties of his mother avail to prevent his following them to Arthur's court. Thence, after adventures which foreshadow his future eminence in knighthood, he rides forth in search of further adventures. He is welcomed and trained in all manner of knightly exercises by Gonemans, who, amid other recommendations, bids him avoid over-readiness in speaking and asking questions. Leaving Gone-mans, he succours an oppressed damsel, Blanche-fleur (Gonemans' niece), with whom he stays

awhile. Again he roves forth, chances upon two fishermen, and is directed for a night's lodging to a castle hard by. Entering, he is led into a great hall wherein is a couch and upon it an old man. A squire enters bearing a sword upon which is written that it will never break save in sore peril. The host gives it to Perceval, "to whom it was adjudged and destined." Another squire enters bearing a lance from which blood drips. Perceval would have asked concerning this wonder, but minds him of the counsel not to speak or inquire too much. Two more squires enter, each with a two-branched candlestick, and a damsel, in her hand a "graal"; this shines and puts out the light of the candles as the sun does that of the stars. A second damsel follows holding a silver plate. At supper the "graal" is again brought, but Perceval does not venture to ask wherefor it is used. On the morrow, awakening, he finds the castle deserted, his horse saddled, and the drawbridge down. He rides forth, and the drawbridge closes so suddenly as well-nigh to crush horse and rider. In the forest he meets a damsel lamenting over a dead knight. She tells him his last night's host was the fisherman who had directed him to the castle; wounded by a spear thrust through both thighs his only solace was in fishing, whence he was called the Fisher King. She asks if Perceval

had seen the bleeding lance, the “graal,” the silver dish—had he asked their meaning? No! then what was his name? Perceval le Gallois! Nay, rather Perceval the Caitiff, for had he asked concerning what he saw, the good king would have been made whole again. She is Perceval’s cousin. After many adventures Perceval returns to Arthur’s court. The following day a damsel, more hideous than could be pictured outside hell, appears, and curses Perceval for omitting to ask concerning lance and grail; had he done so the king would have been healed of his wound and ruled his land in peace; now maidens will be put to shame, orphans and widows made, many knights slain. She further tells of adventures to be achieved at the Castle Orgellous, and of Montesclaire where a damsel is held captive. Gauvain (Sir Gawain) will forth to the imprisoned damsel, Giffès to the Castle Orgellous, Perceval to learn concerning Grail and lance. Nothing is said of Giffès’ adventures, but those of Gauvain are related at great length. Of Perceval we learn that after wandering five years without thinking of God, he meets on Good Friday a band of penitents, is rebuked for riding armed on such a day, and is bidden to confess to a hermit hard by, who turns out to be his uncle: Perceval has sinned in leaving his mother and thereby causing her

death, and for this reason could not ask concerning lance and grail. The story returns to Gauvain, in the midst of whose adventures it breaks off.

Crestien tells us, then, of a precious object, the "graal," preserved in company with other talismans, a bleeding lance, a broken sword, in a mysterious castle ; of a hero who visits this castle ; who should have asked concerning its wonders ; refrains from so doing, and thereby draws down upon his head bitter reproaches and long wanderings. Had he finished his poem he would, doubtless, have told us exactly what the "graal" was, why it and the lance were precious, and the nature of the relation between the hero and the wounded fisher king. As it is, we must turn for this information elsewhere, and we cannot be sure that what we find corresponds to Crestien's plan.

Conte del Graal: the Continuator of Crestien.—Several continuations exist which, from the vague indications yielded by their authors, may be dated between 1190 and 1240. It is noteworthy that Gauvain's adventures fill nearly as much space as do those of Perceval himself ; he, too, is brought to a castle, in which a dead knight lies on a bier ; lance and sword and Grail appear ; Gauvain asks concerning these objects, but falls asleep in the midst of

his host's recital. On the morrow he wakes on the sea strand, finds the country-side, heretofore desert, bursting into blossom, and is at once blessed and banned by the country folk, blessed for having partly delivered the land from its curse, banned for not having wholly succeeded. This adventure occurs in the first continuation, due to a certain GAUTIER, who relates many adventures of Perceval, which seem to have no connection with Grail and lance. Thus he has an *amour* with a Water-fay, inmate of a castle in which is a magic chess-board which plays by itself against the hero ('tis a work of *Morghe la Fée*); she sends him in pursuit of a stag which he slays, but is deprived of the fruit of his success by a "maid of ill chance." He comes again to the Fisher King, asks the necessary questions, and is then given the broken sword to weld together, a task to be accomplished by none save a lover of God and of His spouse, Holy Church. He succeeds save for one little crack, is embraced by the Fisher King, and hailed lord of his house. In another continuation, that of MANESSIER, Perceval achieves the adventure of the castle by slaying Partinaus of the Red Tower, nephew of Espinogre, who had treacherously slain Goon Desert, the Fisher King's brother, in revenge for his uncle's death. The sword with which the foul blow was struck

broke, and the pieces might only be rejoined by the destined avenger; in handling them the Fisher King was wounded. On seeing Partinaus' head the king leaps to his feet, is straightway-made whole, hails Perceval as his nephew, and is succeeded by the latter at his death. In yet another continuation, that of GERBERT, stress is laid upon Perceval's forsaking Blanchefleur, whom, after avenging her uncle Gornumant upon a hideous witch, he rejoins and marries (being assured in a dream that of his seed shall be the Swan Knight and the Deliverer of the Holy Sepulchre), comes again to the Fisher King's castle and pieces together the sword.

In addition to these varying statements concerning Perceval's achievement of the task laid upon him by the hideous damsel, the continuations to Crestien (some 50,000 lines in all) yield several accounts concerning the nature, origin, and history of the Grail and lance. Before discussing these we must first examine a German, a Welsh, and an English romance, the contents of which are closely allied to Crestien's poem, and, in part, to the continuations.

The Parzival of Wolfram von Eschenbach.

—This is a metrical romance, written certainly not later than 1215, as Wolfram died about 1220, and wrote his *William of Orange* after the *Parzival*.

Wolfram claims to follow a French poem by a certain Kiot (*i.e.*, Guiot). Crestien's poem is mentioned, but disparagingly :

The hero's father, Gahmuret, son of Gandin of Anjou, goes to the East, wins the love of a heathen queen, Belakane, whom, after a while, he leaves to go back to his own country, and who in his absence bears a son, Feirefiz. Gahmuret meanwhile has married Herzeloyde ; returning to the East he is slain in battle. [Here begins the portion of the poem which agrees with that of Crestien, the chief differences being as follows] : The more important position assigned to Parzival's cousin ; the far greater prominence of the Grail, described as a stone yielding all manner of food and drink ; its power sustained by a dove which every Good Friday lays a Host upon it ; given after the fall of the rebel angels to Titurel and his dynasty ; preserved by them in the Grail castle, Monsalvatch, and guarded by a sacred order of knights, the Templeisen, whom it chooses itself. These knights are vowed to virginity, their king alone being allowed marriage, and his incurable wound is due to his having taken up arms in the cause of worldly and unlawful love. The question Parzival should have put to him is, " What aileth thee, uncle ? "

When he leaves the castle after the first visit he is mocked at by the inmates for having omitted the question. More stress is laid upon the broken sword, connected with which is a magic spell, to be mastered before Parzival can become master of the Grail castle. In the interview with the hermit uncle Parzival is strongly urged to return to his wife Condwiramur [Crestien's Blanchefleur]. Gauvain's adventures are far more closely connected with the story of the chief hero than is the case in Crestien, though this may be due to the latter's poem breaking off in their midst. In the concluding portion of the work, to which nothing corresponds in Crestien, Parzival fights, unknowing, against his half-brother, Feirefiz, the fight being stopped by mutual recognition. The hideous damsel reappears, and bids Parzival to the Grail castle, where he is rejoined by wife and two sons; Feirefiz is baptized, weds the damsel who has care of the Grail, returns to the East, and is the father of Prester John. Parzival rules over the Grail kingdom, and his son, Loherangrain, is Knight of the Swan.

In comparing Wolfram with Crestien several points are worthy close attention. The Crusading tone of the introductory history of the hero's father is noticeable in connection with the fact that the

order of Grail knights is obviously intended to suggest the great Crusading Order of the Knights Templar. As the whole of this part of the work is connected with a genealogical legend of the Angevin princes (our English Plantagenets), and betrays Southern French affinities in the personal and place-names, which differ greatly from those in Crestien, it is impossible that it can be the invention of the German poet, who must, in these particulars at least, be following a French source, which, again, must have been very different from Crestien. Once admit the existence of this French source and it seems simpler to refer to it the very important difference between the presentment of the Grail in the two works rather than to attribute it to Wolfram. With Crestien the Grail is distinctly a vessel, with Wolfram a stone; the former insists little, the latter much, upon its food giving properties. In Crestien, the Fisher King's wound has no moral justification; in Wolfram, it is the punishment of the king's sin in breaking his vow. In Crestien, the question relates to the nature of the talisman and the use to which it is put; in Wolfram, primarily to the sufferer from the effects of sin, secondarily to the hero who can only attain full perfection by sympathetic compassion with the suffering caused by sin. This deepened and intensified spiritual interpretation of the incident cannot be disassociated from the Crusading framework and the

modelling of the Grail knighthood upon that of the Temple.

Peredur, the son of Evrawc.—This is a Welsh romance, known to us from MSS. of the thirteenth century :

The earlier portion corresponds closely in sequence and general character of the incidents with Crestien's poem. But there is marked difference in the scene at the Fisher King's castle. What Peredur sees is first, a lance dripping blood, then a salver in which is a man's head swimming in blood ; nothing answers to the Grail. After this adventure the Welsh tale, whilst agreeing generally with Crestien, has special features. Thus Peredur defends a castle against the Sorceresses of Gloucester, one of whom hails him as their destined overcomer, yet from whom he learns chivalry and the use of arms. There is also a large section (nearly one third of the tale) to which nothing answers either in Crestien or in any extant French work. In the latter part of the tale, after the appearance of the hideous damsel, the Welsh, whilst offering to a large extent the same sequence of incidents as in Crestien and Gautier, relates them in a far more coherent and intelligible manner. For the tale closes with the appearance of a youth who reveals himself as Peredur's

cousin—he it was had borne the bloody head in the salver; he, in the guise of the hideous damsel, had incited Peredur to continue the quest; he had intervened in the chess-board and stag-hunt adventures to aid and incite Peredur, his object being that Peredur should avenge upon the Sorceresses of Gloucester the death of the cousin whose head was carried in the salver, and the laming of the uncle.

The Welsh tale is thus in a large measure a logical and straightforward version of a hero's vengeance upon supernatural beings for the injuries inflicted by them upon his kindred. As is frequently the case, these supernatural beings know that they must ultimately succumb, and are indeed constrained to furnish means for their own undoing; as is again frequently the case, the hero is passive, almost a dummy, the real protagonist being one of the injured kinsmen. Had we the story in a purer form we should find that the injury, so far as he is concerned, consists in the enchantment of hideous and unsexing disguise, an enchantment from which the consummation of the vengeance can alone free him. The object of the talismans is here to remind the hero of the wrong done and to supply the avenging weapon. *Peredur*, it will be seen, is like *Manessier* in being a vengeance story pure and simple, and like the *Gawain* visit to the Grail castle

in Gautier, in so far as the head on the salver in the one case answers to the knight on the bier in the other.

Sir Percyvelle.—An English metrical romance found in the Thornton MS., written shortly before the middle of the fifteenth century; to judge by the language the romance in its extant form cannot be much older than the date of transcription.

The opening incidents are similar to those in Crestien and the Welsh *Peredur*, but with this difference: in all three the hero's first adventure after reaching Arthur's court is to slay a knight who had offered grievous insult either to Arthur or to his queen; in Crestien and in the Welsh tale little stress is laid upon this incident, but in the English romance it supplies the backbone of the story (in Wolfram, too, the incident is more emphasised than in Crestien). This knight, known as the Red Knight, had slain Percyvelle's father and been foredoomed to perish at the hands of the avenging son; moreover, he has a witch mother who, later, encounters the hero and is slain by him, and he has persecuted with his enmity Percyvelle's uncle and cousins. The remainder of the story is taken up by an incident corresponding to Perceval's deliverance of Blanchefleur in Crestien, and to Percyvelle's rejoining

his mother, who, thinking he was dead, had lost her senses. He ultimately goes to the Holy Land and there dies.

The English romance contains nothing corresponding to the visits to the first uncle (Gone-mans) or to the Fisher King, and makes no mention of the Grail or of any other talisman. It is a simple and straightforward version of a widely-spread tale of a son's vengeance upon his father's slayers. But for the final touch of the hero's going to the Holy Land there is no suggestion of religious colouring.

Before discussing the statements made by the continuations of Crestien respecting the origin and nature of the Grail and other talismans beheld by the hero at the Fisher King's castle, it is advisable to sum up the evidence on this point already laid before the reader. One French version (Crestien) speaks of a sword, a bleeding lance, and a Grail (a vessel); another (if Wolfram's poem be regarded as representing a lost French original) of sword and lance and Grail (a stone); the Welsh tale mentions a bleeding lance and a head in a salver; the English romance is silent concerning any talisman. In three versions (*Conte del Graal*, Wolfram, and *Peredur*), the talismans are in some way connected with a hero's restoration to health of a kinsman. From Crestien we can only surmise

how or why this happens, but learn from one of his continuators (Manessier) that it is an effect of successful vengeance ; this is also the case in *Peredur*, whilst in *Sir Percyvelle* there is also an injury avenged. In Wolfram, on the other hand, the idea of vengeance is absent ; the injured kinsman, suffering from the effects of his own sin, is relieved when the hero rises to such a height of spiritual insight as enables him to understand and sympathise with the sin-caused suffering. In the Welsh story alone, is the machinery by which the vengeance is effected (talismans and transformed kinsman), used in a reasonable and intelligible way. We further note that the scene of all these versions is laid in Britain, and that the personages are almost exclusively British, the exceptions being found in Wolfram, where they are mostly Angevin or Breton.

We may now turn to the accounts concerning the nature and origin of the Grail and other talismans to be found in the *Conte del Graal*. There are several, differing in detail, but agreeing substantially, that the Grail is the dish (of the Last Supper) in which Joseph of Arimathea caught the blood of the Saviour as He hung upon the Cross, and the lance the one wherewith Christ's body was pierced. Joseph was cast into prison, miraculously delivered, and, exiled in company with the sister of Nicodemus (Veronica), who had

an image of the Lord, passed into Britain, the promised land, with a large following. When short of food Joseph prayed for the Grail in which had been gathered the holy blood; it was sent, and the company had bread and wine and meat in plenty. After Joseph's death the Grail passed into the keeping of his kin, from whom both Perceval's father and the Fisher King were descended. In another account Joseph is sustained whilst in captivity by the Grail; when released he has adventures with a heathen king, Evelach, and his brother-in-law, Seraphe, whom he converts and re-names Mordrains and Nasciens. Yet another account duplicates Joseph's captivity after his arrival in England, and the Fisher King is duplicated by Evelach-Mordrains, wounded for presumption in approaching too near the Grail, and miraculously kept alive to be healed by the best of all knights of Joseph's kin.

These various accounts are found in what are plainly the latest portions of the vast compilation known as the *Conte del Graal*, and in several cases their disagreement with the context stamps them as interpolations.

In asking ourselves if these statements faithfully represent that description of the Grail and allied talismans, which we must assume to have been in Crestien's source and which he would have reproduced had he finished his poem, we cannot

fail to note the grave and essential discrepancies between the different portions of the legend taken as a whole. Why, if the Grail talismans are of such surpassing sanctity, is the use to which they are put so apparently profane? Did Christ send forth Holy Vessel and lance to Britain merely that Perceval might heal his kinsman and succeed him in his kingship, or Gauvain restore a waste land to fertility, or that the dwellers in the Grail Castle might feed on the fat of the land? Again, is it not significant that the very portion of the *Conte del Graal* (Manessier's), which dwells most lengthily upon the sacred Christian nature of the talismans, is also that which pictures Perceval's conduct in as distinctly non-Christian a light as in the *Peredur* or *Sir Percyvelle*? And how, if the whole story started from the sacred nature of the talismans, hallowed by their association with the Passion, came the Welsh and English romances to discard these sacred associations, to omit the most sacred of the precious objects, and to substitute a story of blood feud and vengeance unmarked by any trace of spiritual, let alone specifically Christian, feeling? Finally, why does the one version, Wolfram's, which is animated by deep and lofty spiritual feeling, *not* represent the Grail as the receptacle of Christ's blood?

These questions suggest the answer that the Christian legendary statements about the Grail

talismans are really secondary, and intended to explain the importance attached to them in the story of their quest. But before accepting this answer as correct we must note that Christian symbolism of some sort is involved in *all* the quest stories. Thus alike in Crestien, Wolfram, and the *Peredur* is found the Good Friday incident: the hero having wandered long and far and lost count of days and seasons, is met on Good Friday by a knight who rebukes him for riding armed on such a day, and bids him to confession and absolution. In Wolfram, too, the machinery by which the miraculous virtue of the Grail is sustained is distinctively Christian and connected with Good Friday.

Two elements thus seem to be present, a definitely Christian and a possibly non-Christian one, and although the Christian element in one form appears late and secondary, yet in some shape or other it is present in the very oldest versions of the story as a whole.

One thing we could safely postulate, namely, that the distinctively Christian element traceable in the *Conte del Graal* must exist somewhere else in a more coherent and rational form. In effect, two versions of such a form exist: a prose romance, known as the *Grand St. Graal*, of unknown authorship, and a metrical trilogy, due to a certain Robert de Borron, of which only the first two portions, *Joseph of Arimathea* and *Merlin*, are extant.

SECOND CLASS OF VERSIONS : EARLY HISTORY OF
THE GRAIL.

Robert de Borron : Joseph of Arimathea, Merlin.—Borron's poem is dedicated to a Walter, Count of Montbéliard, a famous Crusader, who became Regent of Cyprus and Constable of Jerusalem ; he died in 1212, and is not likely to have been in a position to act as patron before 1170, so that these dates may be taken as limits for the writing of Borron's romances.

Christ's Passion is described, and how Joseph, having obtained the Lord's body, washes it and collects the blood in a vessel. In their anger the Jews cast him into a prison, where he is visited by Christ, who gives him the precious vessel containing His holiest blood and confides secret words to him : Joseph is to yield the vessel to three persons only, who are to take it in the name of the Trinity ; he is further instructed concerning the Sacrament and how he is to celebrate it. Years pass and Joseph remains in prison until released by Vespasian. He then converts many, among them his sister Enygeus and her husband Brons (or Hebron). Sorrow falls upon the Christian community through indulgence in carnal sin. Joseph kneels before the vessel, weeps, and asks wherefor his people suffer. He is bidden prepare a table in memory

of the one whereat Christ ate the Last Supper. At that table an empty seat is to be left, which may not be filled until a son is born to Brons and Enygeus; a sinner who attempts to occupy it is swallowed by the earth; a divine voice then tells Joseph that not Brons' son but his grandson shall fill the seat. Brons is to catch a fish and place it on the table by the vessel; by this means the sinners are detected, and the vessel is called "Graal," as being agreeable to those who behold it. In time Brons and Enygeus have twelve sons; Joseph, praying before the vessel, announces that eleven will marry and one, Alain, remain single. But almost immediately Joseph is bidden tell Alain all about the vessel, and how from him there shall issue an heir who is to keep it; Alain is to lead his brethren westwards. This he does. Another of the company, Petrus, is also commanded by the voice to go to the Vale of Avaron. Joseph is further told that Brons is to keep the vessel after his (Joseph's) death, and is bidden instruct him in the Holy Words God spake in the prison. Brons is to be known as the Rich Fisher, from the fish he caught; he is to wait for his son's son and to give him the vessel when the meaning of the Blessed Trinity shall be known. After seeing Brons put in possession of Grail and headship Petrus departs, followed after three days by Brons,

Joseph remaining in the land in which he was born.

The *Merlin* follows immediately, in substantial agreement with the other Merlin romances up to Arthur's withdrawal of the sword from the anvil, where the author stops, with the remark that he can no longer speak of Arthur until he has told of Alain, son of Brons, what manner of man he was, of his kin, and of how the woes of Britain were caused.

It should be noted that Borron's poem, in the Joseph portion at least, is obviously abridged, and, possibly, altered in parts by a maladroit editor. What gives colour to this surmise is that, in addition to the original metrical form, there exist several prose versions, in which occur a number of interpolations designed to bring the text into conformity with later developments of the legend. Some such process may already have begun before the poem was turned into prose, and to it may be due discrepancies such as that Alain, vowed to celibacy in one line is married almost in the next, or that now Brons' son, now his grandson, is to achieve the venture of the empty seat, and, presumably, to be the Grail-keeper, or that, apparently, two different accounts of the Grail's arrival in Britain, in the one case in Alain's, in the other in Brons' guardianship, have been confused. It

is, however, possible that these discrepancies are due to Borron himself, and are the result of an unskilful contamination of two forms of the legend.

In spite of these discrepancies, it is noteworthy that, with the exception of Wolfram's *Parzival*, Borron's poem is the only work of the cycle which is not only animated by a Christian symbolic conception (as are several other romances), but which carries out that conception in an intelligible manner by means of the incidents of the story. This conception may be briefly summarised as follows: Sin, the cause of want among the people; separation of pure and impure by means of the fish (symbol of Christ); punishment of the self-willed false disciple; reward of Brons by charge of the Grail; symbolising of the Trinity by the three tables and the three Grail-keepers.

In view of the skill with which the conception is worked out, it seems more reasonable to attribute the above noted discrepancies to the existence of an earlier form of the legend in which there were only two Grail-keepers, father and son, or uncle and nephew, traces of which have persisted in Borron's version.

The Grand St. Graal.—The romance thus entitled is one of the longest and latest of the cycle. Allusion to an episode contained in it, and

it alone, is made in the chronicle of a certain Helinandus, assigned to a date prior to the year 1204, and this has been held by some scholars to enable the dating of the romance. But the argument is doubtful, firstly, on account of the extremely composite nature of the Grand St. Graal in its present form, and, secondly, because the dating of the passage in Helinandus' Chronicle is by no means sure.

The romance opens with a prologue in which the authorship is boldly ascribed to Christ Himself. It then tells of Joseph of Arimathea, who, believing in Christ and desiring to possess somewhat belonging to Him, carries off the dish of the Last Supper, and, having begged Christ's body from Pilate, uses the dish to collect the blood flowing therefrom before he places it in the sepulchre. He is imprisoned, but comforted by Christ and fed from the holy dish. Delivered by Vespasian, baptized by St. Philip, he converts seventy-five of his kin and friends, and, at the Lord's command, makes an ark for the dish. The company, miraculously fed thereby in its journey through the wilderness, reaches Sarras. Here Joseph and his son, Josephes, aid and convert Evelach. Josephes is instructed by Christ how to perform the Sacrament, and is made sovran shepherd over the new sheep. When the

dish is first shown to Evelach's brother-in-law (who receives the name Nasciens at baptism) he says it pleases him (*li grée*) entirely, hence it is called *Gréal*. Josephes, wounded by a lance, and Nasciens blinded for approaching too near the Grail, are both healed by an angel, the lance head being preserved: it shall drop blood at the beginning of the Wonders of the Holy Grail and the Lance, and but one man should behold those marvels of the Grail, and but one other be struck by the lance, and he should be the last of Josephes' kin, and his healer, the achiever of the Grail wonders, should be the last of Nasciens' kin. Divers adventures of Evelach (baptized Mordrains) and Nasciens follow, and visions to Nasciens concerning his descendants ("all these wonders are true, as Christ Himself wrote the book of the Holy Grail, and, save it, naught else but the Lord's Prayer and the judgment on the woman taken in adultery"). Nasciens finds Solomon's sword and is wounded by it. The story returns to Josephes, who leads a choice company to Great Britain. Here they find Nasciens' son, Celidoine. Joseph and Josephes are imprisoned by King Crudel of North Wales, but delivered by Mordrains, to whom our Lord appears in the likeness of one crucified, bidding him go to Britain. Mordrains retires to a hermitage, building a monastery for white monks,

and stays there until Perceval and Galahad see him, as is told in the tale of the Holy Grail. We then hear of Brons, who up to now has not been mentioned ; he brings his twelve sons to Josephes, eleven are married, and the twelfth having chosen virginity is appointed guardian of the Grail at Josephes' death. Alain's fishing is described, and how, having caught a fish which suffices to feed all the company, he is called the Rich Fisher, a title borne after him by all the Grail keepers. We are also told of Petrus, who converts and marries a heathen princess, and from whom descends Lot of Orcanie, father of Gauvain. Also of Galahad, Joseph's son, whom the men of Hocelice take as their king, and who is ancestor to Ywain, son of Urien. Joseph and Josephes die and the latter confides the Grail to Alain. A lordly castle hight Corbenic (" Holy Vessel in Chaldee "), is built for it. For sleeping in such a holy place a king is wounded through both thighs. At Alain's death his brother Josue becomes Grail keeper, and after him six kings, the last of them Pelles, on whose daughter Lancelot of the Lake begets Galahad, Lancelot being, himself, eighth in descent from Celidoine, son of Nasciens.

There exist three romances which are concerned with the Quest of the Grail, but, neverthe-

less, must be reckoned among the two Early History versions just summarised, with which they are closely connected. One of the three, known as the *Quête del St. Graal*, was for long the most famous work of the cycle, and is still the one best known to Englishmen, as it was embodied, almost entire, by Malory in the *Morte Darthur*. Malory's work being generally accessible, the story need only be given briefly.

Quête del St. Graal.—It tells of Lancelot's son, Galahad, coming to Arthur's court, of his achieving the adventure of the Siege Perillous and the sword in the block; of the appearance of the Holy Grail, which fills each beholder with meat such as he longs for; of Gauvain's vow to go in quest of it for a year and a day, which the other knights of the Round Table join in. The adventures which befall Galahad and the other questers are for the most part such as are foretold in the Grand St. Graal, and mostly exemplify the sin of carnal love, and the ascetic virtue of Galahad. One, however, assigned to Lancelot, is not mentioned in that romance: Lancelot finds a wounded knight seeking solace from the Holy Vessel, the Grail appears, but Lancelot says never a word, for which aftertimes much mischance was his; when he awakes he is bitterly reproached.

Perceval finds Mordrains kept alive, having fed on naught but the Lord's body for 400 years, and waiting the arrival of the good knight. Lancelot comes to Castle Corbenic, but is struck insensible and powerless for many days for approaching too near the Holy Vessel. Galahad, Perceval, and Bors ultimately come to Castle Corbenic, where they are joined by nine (or ten) other knights; Josephes appears and celebrates the Sacrament for the whole company. Christ makes Himself visible to Galahad and bids him to Sarras whither the Grail is to depart, Britain being unworthy of it; but first he is to heal the maimed king. The three then go on Solomon's ship, are thrown into prison and there fed by the Holy Grail; a final revelation is followed by the death of Galahad, followed after a year by that of Perceval, who is buried in the same grave. Bors returns to Britain and tells the adventures of the Holy Grail, which are written down and kept in the Abbey of Salisbury, whence Walter Map drew them to make his book for the love of King Henry.

The second romance is almost the least known work of the cycle. It derives the name under which it is commonly known (the *Didot Perceval*), from the fact that the solitary MS. in which it is

found belonged to the well-known collector, A. F. Didot. This MS. also contains prose versions of Borron's two poems, *Joseph of Arimathea* and *Merlin*, and it is natural, at first blush, to take the *Didot Perceval* for a prose rendering of the otherwise lost conclusion of Borron's trilogy. But this, as we shall see, is certainly not the case.

Didot Perceval.—The story opens with Merlin's account of how he made the Round Table, our Lord having made the first, Joseph the second, he (Merlin) the third. He also tells of the Rich Fisher King who is old and full of infirmities, and may not be healed until a good knight comes to ask of what use is the Grail. The story turns then to Perceval, son of Alein le Gros, whom, when dying, the Holy Ghost directs to send his son to Arthur's court. He achieves, though with difficulty, the venture of the Perillous Seat, learns about Rich Fisher and Grail, and vows to quest for them. Many knights make the same vow. Perceval then has a number of adventures similar to those in Gautier's section of the *Conte del Graal*, notably those at the Chess-board castle and the Stag Hunt. He then comes to the Fisher King's castle, sees lance and silver plate and a vessel in which was our Lord's blood. He had fain asked, but fears to displease the king, minding him of

the injunction laid upon him not to be over curious, for a man of idle words is displeasing to the Lord. In the morning all the inmates of the castle have disappeared, and on riding forth he is reviled. After further adventures the Good Friday incident occurs ("the songmen in their pleasing rhymes say nothing of this," asserts the writer!). Merlin then appears, urges Perceval to go again to his grandfather; he does so, asks the question, the king is cured, and the enchantments of Britain cease. Perceval is instructed concerning lance (the one wherewith Longis pierced Christ's side) and Grail (the vessel in which Joseph caught Christ's blood as it flowed to the ground), so called because it is agreeable to worthy men. The Holy Ghost bids Brons teach the secret words our Lord on the Cross told Joseph; he does so, but the writer cannot, and may not, say what they were. Brons is carried off by angels and Perceval remains.

Comparison of this romance with Borron's undoubted work shows that they cannot be by the same man. Borron's capacity for working out a spiritual conception has already been noted. It is certain that he did not intend to represent either Brons or Alain as subject to a mysterious curse, from which son or grandson was to free them. He did, on the other hand, intend the visit of the

“third man” to exemplify certain spiritual dogmas, and that this should be worked out through certain personages and certain incidents which are specified. Now the *Didot Perceval* lays almost as much stress as the *Conte del Graal* upon the mysterious malady of the Fisher King, but it does not exemplify the spiritual dogmas insisted upon by Borron, and it neglects or misunderstands the incidents to which he intended to pay special attention. It is, in fact, an incongruous jumble of hints from Borron’s work, and a confused version of the *Conte del Graal*. Its intention, which is undoubted, to be a sequel to Borron’s poems, makes it almost certain that he never completed his trilogy.

Perceval le Gallois.—The third romance will be known to many English readers, thanks to Dr. Sebastian Evans’ exquisite English version, styled the *High History of the Holy Grail*. It is also known as the *Perlesvaus*, but it will be convenient to designate it by the title given it by its first editor, M. Ch. Potvin, *Perceval le Gallois*. It is in prose, and was written for a certain John, Lord of Nesle in Flanders, who was living in the year 1225.

Of all the Quest romances this is the most confused and aimless. It professes to be written by Josephus at the bidding of an angel. It tells of the good knight descended by his mother

from Joseph d'Abarimacie, who kept the lance wherewith Christ was pierced, and the Holiest Vessel in which His blood was gathered. On his father's side the good knight was descended from Nicodemus; his mother's brother was the Fisher King, King Pelles, and the King of Castle Deadly. In his youth he came to the Court of the Rich Fisher, but omitted to ask whom one served with the Holiest Grail, whence wars ensued and the King fell into sickness. Afterwards both Gawain and Lancelot came to the Grail Castle. Gawain first to the Castle of Enquiry, where the sword is preserved wherewith John the Baptist was beheaded. Gawain is silent in the Grail Castle, where he beholds Grail and lance. Lancelot may not see the Grail on account of his sinful love to Guinevere. The Fisher King dies, and his land is seized by his brother, King of Castle Deadly, who is a heathen; Perceval's struggle against him, his victory and winning of the Grail Castle are told at great length. He is visited by Arthur, Lancelot, and Gawain. Arthur beholds the five mysterious transformations of the Grail, 'about which may no man speak, for the secrets of the sacrament shall no man disclose save God give him power thereto.' The story does not end here, but tells of many other adventures of Perceval, who finally sails away on a ship with white sail on which is figured a red

lion, 'never has man learnt what became of him.' This story, written in Latin (from which it was translated into French), was found in the island Avallon, in a holy house of God on the shores of the Moor adventurous, where Arthur and Guinevere are buried.

A special feature of this romance is the insistence upon Perceval's virginity. It is as marked a feature in his case as is that of Galahad in the *Quête*.

The difference in tone and sentiment between these romances and those of the first class is so marked as to make the reader feel he has been transported to another world. The chivalric is here subordinated to the Christian ascetic element. True, the hero's prowess is insisted upon in set conventional terms, but the centre of interest is shifted from his personality and from the feats and ventures by which it is manifested to the symbolic machinery of the precious vessel and its accompaniments. Contrast the two romances in which the spiritual element avowedly dominates: Wolfram's *Parzival* and the *Quête del St. Graal*. In the former the personality of the hero is the main thing; we follow the ripening, strengthening, ennobling development of a genuine man, one who suffers and sins, but who also loves and endures, is staunch and true, and who, purified by the dis-

cipline of suffering, attains at last the summit of usefulness and happiness. This man is a knight, a man of the world, as it was conceived of by the author's generation, sharing in the feelings and sentiments common to his class; his knightly struggles and ventures have an interest for their narrator independent of any symbolic significance. In the *Quête*, on the other hand, the hero, a shadowy perfection at the outset, remains throughout a shadowy perfection, a bloodless and unreal creature, as fit when he first appears upon the scene as when he quits it to accomplish a quest, purposeless inasmuch as it only removes him from a world in which he has neither part nor share. The driving power of the romance is supplied by its fierce insistence upon the supreme excellence of celibacy and by the fervour of its sacramental symbolism. All else is indifferent or hateful to the author.

These differences in tone and feeling, not to be fully appreciated save by those who read the original text, would alone suffice to negative the hypothesis that the two sets of romances are the dissevered halves of a homogeneous whole, or variant versions of a common original theme. The distinction between them is far more deeply seated.

The second class of Grail romances gives, it has been seen, a Quest of the Holy Vessel differing markedly in part from that in the first class.

Now in two versions (*Didot Perceval* and *P. le Gallois*) belonging to this class the hero is Perceval, as in the first class, and in the *Quête*, Perceval is only second to the main hero. Again, one, the *Didot Perceval*, reproduces many of the adventures of the *Conte del Graal*, whilst the *Quête* also has the central adventures at the Fisher King's castle, though greatly altered and attached to a secondary personage, Lancelot. The inference is unmistakable; the Quest portions of the second class of Grail romances are in part based upon and derived from a Quest story similar to that found in the *Conte del Graal* and allied versions. To understand the real significance of the Quest incidents we must address ourselves firstly and chiefly to the romances of the first class. How does it stand with the other portion of the legend, the Early History of the Grail? The later portions of the *Conte del Graal* contain, we saw, fragments of an Early History substantially the same as that found in *Grand St. Graal* and *Quête*. Wolfram's *Parzival*, on the other hand, contains an Early History which is absolutely and entirely different. Remembering that those portions of the *Conte del Graal* which do yield this Early History are demonstrably the latest in date of that vast compilation, noting that they bear the traces of being obvious and at times inconsistent interpolations, the further inference is, if not certain, at least highly probable, that the Early History of

the *Conte del Graal* is based upon and derived from one akin to that found in the *Grand St. Graal* and the *Quête*. In other words, each section of the legend has borrowed from the other features and incidents inconsistent with its real essence. The fact that Crestien's continuators had to turn for information to works animated by such a different spirit justifies the surmise that they found nothing of a similar nature in his source, and that, as in the intervening lapse of time a special Christian account of the Grail had become the popular one, they felt constrained to clumsily substitute this dominant version for that of Crestien's source.

If what may be called the Joseph of Arimathea Early History be considered closely, it will be seen that in both its two main forms it is essentially a legend of the Conversion of Britain. Both forms start with Joseph, but at a later stage go widely asunder. In Borron it is kinsmen of Joseph, Brons, or Alain, or Petrus, who are the leaders of the evangelising emigration, it is to them that the Holy Vessel is confided. In the *Grand St. Graal-Quête* version Joseph's son, Josephes, is the leading spirit, and the fortunes of the Grail are bound up with those of Joseph's direct descendants or with the converted heathens Mordrains and Nasciens and their kin. This second is the popular version, the one which affected the later stages of the *Conte del Graal*. The fact that what may be called the

Vulgate Early History (whether in its Brons or Josephes form) is in reality a Conversion of Britain legend, is important when we recollect that the personages of the *Conte del Graal* and allied versions (the oldest form of the Quest) are British, and that the scene of the story is Britain, as also that the Wolfram Early History is asserted to be derived from a chronicle of the Angevin princes, the lords of Britain throughout the formative period of the Grail cycle. The romances of this cycle belong, by their origin, their purport, and their content, to England and not to France, a fact obscured for us by their being written almost entirely in French, and to a large extent by French writers, and only intelligible when we recall that throughout the twelfth century French was almost as much the language of what is now England as of what is now France, and that throughout a large part of the century the *Matière de Bretagne* was the fashionable and influential romance for all that was cultured in Western Christendom. It also, I think, puts out of court all attempts to derive this great body of romance from the numerous Holy Vessels found on the Continent since the First Crusade, and of which the *Sacro Catino* of Genoa was the most famous. The legends connected with them have none of them any connection with Britain.

But if the Early History of the Grail be thus a conversion of Britain legend, whence does it

derive its personages and incidents? The answer to this question decisively confirms the contention that the Grail romances are of insular and not of Continental origin. The account of Joseph, of his relation to Christ, his captivity, &c., is derived, in addition to the Gospel narrative, from a group of apocryphal writings, of which the *Evangelium Nicodemi* is the central and dominant one. Now it has been shown that, owing to circumstances of which we know nothing, this group of apocrypha was familiar to, and influential with, English writers in the eighth to eleventh centuries, at a time when no trace of it can be found in the other literatures of Western Christendom. Of course, these apocryphal writings are entirely silent about Joseph's conversion of Britain. But we do find an elaborate twelfth century account of the evangelisation of Britain by Joseph in a series of documents connected with, and undoubtedly originating from, the famous West British abbey of Glastonbury. Ignored as it is by Geoffrey of Monmouth, that insatiable romance-monger, the legend can hardly be older than the second third of the century. Whether it is as old; whether, in particular it is mentioned in the genuine writings of Geoffrey's contemporary, William of Malmesbury; whether it be not a reflection of the Grail romances, these are questions still debated by scholars. As the details are different from

anything in the romances, as in its earlier and simpler form there is no mention of the Holy Vessel, it is hard to see how the Glastonbury legend can be regarded as an outcome of the Grail romances. The balance of probability strongly inclines to the view that divers and independent legends of Joseph's conversion of Britain originated in twelfth century England, and that their origin and popularity was in some way connected with the early and wide spread in England of the apocryphal texts which had Joseph as their hero.

Glastonbury was not only a centre of ecclesiastical legend *ad majorem gloriam Britanniae*, but also of the long and persistent efforts of the Angevin lord of England to utilise the Arthur legend for his own purpose in winning over his Celtic feudatories. Here in 1191 was found the tomb of Arthur and Guinevere, a discovery intended to give the *coup de grâce* to the hopes of Arthur's return and victorious championship of a Cymric revolt. Glastonbury also became associated in the twelfth century with Avalon, the old Celtic over-sea paradise; in what manner and at how early a date this association originated are still matters of dispute. It has been suggested that it arose precisely through the Grail romances; but when it is recollected how casual is the allusion in Borron's poem to the vales of Avalon, the goal of the Grail company's wanderings, the suggestion

lacks all probability. There is yet another remote and indirect connection between Glastonbury and the traditional account of the Grail legend. A persistent tradition, reaching back to the early thirteenth century, has ascribed the authorship of many of the Arthurian prose romances to Walter Map, the trusted counsellor of Henry II., the Angevin Lord of England whose efforts to utilise the Arthurian romances for his own objects have been mentioned. This traditional ascription is especially definite as regards the Lancelot cycle, in which the secondary versions of the Quest, those which make Galahad, son of Lancelot, its hero, must be reckoned. The final words of the *Quête del St. Graal*, asserting that "Walter Map made the book for the love of his lord, King Henry, who had the story translated from Latin into French," have already been quoted. All these facts, at least, hint at determined attempts made during the second half of the twelfth century to claim for the Church in Britain an origin well-nigh as illustrious as that of any Church, and for the land of Britain a special sanctity as the abiding place of the holiest of Christian relics; these attempts are inextricably bound up with the Arthur legend, and are in part traditionally associated with the trusted adviser of a king who, as we know, sought to utilise that legend for his own ends. They originate directly, or are associated indirectly, with a famous

sanctuary of British Christianity, one which has also other associations, seemingly of a more archaic, non-Christian character.

To realise the fact that both divisions of the Grail legend have their source in twelfth century England raises afresh the question whether they are really parts of one harmonious whole, parts equal in age and import? Assume for one moment that they are, and let us endeavour to realise what was the intention of the legend-writer, and in what way he proposed to carry out that intention. He sought, it is evident, to glorify his own country, a land blessed, above all others, by the presence of Christ's faithful disciples and of the sacred relics of the Passion. The holiness of these relics, the *raison d'être* of the whole legend, must, we would expect, be insisted upon from the first. What, then, *could* be his object in devising an account of what happened to the relics after they had safely reached Britain? To explain why they were no longer found there? To describe how the Grail-keepers fell from their high estate, and were ultimately restored thereto? Such an object would be intelligible, nay more, would be the only one which, so far as we can see, could have occurred to a writer who planned the whole legend with deliberate foresight. Can it be pretended that it is carried out in the Quest portion of the legend? True, the *Quête del St. Graal* does assert the

unworthiness of Britain to be the home of the Grail, but casually and without any attempt at explanation. True, the *Parzival* does give an explanation, the only one in the entire cycle which appeals to us as in any sense adequate, of the Grail-keeper's suffering. But would one legend-writer have set in motion Christ and Joseph and another have brought down the Grail from Heaven merely to point the moral of Anfortas' unlawful love? And if we could believe that such was his purpose, how are we to account for the fact that every other version (even the most ascetic in spirit) has utterly departed from it? Must we not rather recognise that the suffering of the Grail-keeper, so far from being an inherent element of a Conversion of Britain legend is rather in tacit disaccord with the essential spirit of such a legend and its purpose of exalting Britain as the land favoured by the Holy Vessel and its guardians?

Assume, on the other hand, that the Quest, as we have it in its oldest forms—the story of a hero seeking, by means of certain talismans, to restore a kinsman to health and prosperity, or to avenge an injury done him—became inextricably attached to a Christian legend with which originally it had nothing to do. Does not such an assumption provide a more plausible explanation of all the facts? Would not the attempt to interpret in a specifically Christian sense objects and incidents which in

themselves have nothing Christian, inevitably be carried in a half-hearted and inconsistent way at the best? Would not the nature and intensity of the Christian transformation process vary according to the nature and zeal of the individual writer? Would not such portions as lent themselves less readily to the sanctity of association with Christ be treated with little ceremony, and reshaped at the narrator's fancy? Could we expect any strong regard for the original incidents from writers to whom they were only of value after they had received a Christian gloss, or much feeling for the pertinency of that gloss, provided its Christian character were sufficiently decided? Arguments of this kind cannot be dismissed as of an *a priori* nature; they are based on the ordinary working of the human mind. Every form of imaginative narrative, however fantastic, however detached from reality, has its own logic, to which it inevitably conforms so long as it develops naturally. It is because there is logical disaccord between the various sections of the Grail legends, as we have them, that we are justified in asserting they can never have formed parts of one harmonious whole. The logical inconsistency is even more flagrant if, turning from the legend as a whole, the nature and attributes of the Holy Vessel itself be considered. In the later stages of the cycle it is, as we have seen, an object of the utmost sanctity: by its origin,

its properties, its effect upon its devotees, it appertains to what is holiest in Christianity, and yet it retains to the very end attributes which are purely material, and which could not have belonged to it, had it been from the outset the Sacramental Vessel and nothing else. Even the most definitely and fervently spiritual of the romances, the *Parzival* and the *Quête*, dwell strongly upon its food-producing qualities.

Before proceeding to examine the older versions of the Quest on the assumption of its original non-Christian character, certain aspects of the specific Christian portion of the developed legend claim attention. As we saw, this has its sources in apocryphal far more than in canonical Scripture ; as we have assumed, it is superimposed upon a non-Christian basis. Little wonder, then, if we note a disconcerting, unorthodox aspect to be found nowhere else, to my knowledge, in the vast mass of mediæval legend of a distinctively Christian character. After making every allowance, however, for these two factors they fail, I hold, to account fully for the effect produced, an effect only to be realised by reading the romances as a whole. Apocryphal legend is often puerile, often tainted by a questionable mysticism derived from Gnostic sources ; the adaptation by unskilful hands of non-Christian incidents to a Christian scheme of interpretation must needs yield occasional results of an

unorthodox character. But the sense in which the Grail romances are unorthodox, or rather anti-orthodox, is far more deep-seated and thorough. They not only claim for the Church of Britain an origin more illustrious than any to which it had pretended before the twelfth century, one which, if seriously maintained, would have been most unwelcome to the chief ecclesiastical authority of Christendom, they also set up a kind of uncanonical church with sacraments, unexceptionable it may be from the purely dogmatic standpoint, but open otherwise to the most serious objections. What may be called the Grail Church has in either form of the Early History an origin only less sacred than that of the official Church of Christendom—nay, in the Sacramental Vessel form (*Borron, Grand St. Graal-Quête*) it excels that Church as possessing the most sacred relics of the faith. The author of the *Grand St. Graal* is fully conscious of this when he tacitly claims his romance, the work of Christ Himself, as superior to Gospel.

In endeavouring to account for the remarkable claims put forward for the Grail Church and its Scriptures two points may be noted. In the *Parzival* form of the Early History the Grail Church is certainly reminiscent of, and modelled upon, the organisation of the Knights Templar. In the *Grand St. Graal* the two most prominent personages, after Josephes, are the converted heathen

warriors Mordrains and Nasciens. Mordrains fills to some extent in the *Quête* the same rôle as Anfortas in the *Parzival*; Nasciens is the direct ancestor of the successful Grail quester. Now both are, without doubt, the outcome of crusading conditions, of the early stage of that great conflict between West and East, between Christendom and the Moslem world, which called the Knights Templar into existence. We know what, at a later date, was the attitude of the Church to the Temple, and how the latter fell, crushed by the terrible accusations of impiety and alliance with the Powers of Darkness brought against it. Is it too rash a conjecture that the Grail romances reveal, in part, early attempts to claim for the knightly priesthood a position and sanction equal, if not superior, to those of the regular priesthood? If only a conjecture, it is at least better founded than the endeavours of earlier scholars to ascribe the essential heterodoxy of the Grail romances to the separatist tendencies of the British Church. May we not further recall the fact that the greatest of the Angevin kings, the politician who so persistently endeavoured to utilise the Arthurian legend for his own purposes, the patron of Walter Map, the traditional inspirer of the Lancelot Grail romances, was the opponent of Becket, and waged the bitterest struggle of his strenuous life against what, to use modern terminology, may be styled Ultramontanism?

That portion of the Grail romances which we have seen reason to regard as originally non-Christian now claims an examination. And here we must bear in mind the antecedent probability that, as well as the Christian portion, it has been modified by association with alien conceptions and incidents. In no instance, not even in the case of the *Peredur* or *Sir Percyvelle*, can we be sure that features and incidents have not been distorted in order to fit them into a Christian framework. Allowing for this possibility, and considering the Quest versions as a whole, we detect two main themes in the complicated mass of adventure of which they are formed. Certain versions, as we saw, are vengeance stories pure and simple, *Sir Percyvelle*, for instance, and Manessier's conclusion to Crestien's poem; in the *Peredur* the vengeance conception predominates, but we note other and inconsistent elements. Two of the mysterious talismans should, it would seem, be referred to this, the vengeance theme—the bleeding lance (as a rule the weapon with which the hero's injured kinsman has been slain or wounded), and the broken sword (as a rule the weapon with which the injury is to be avenged). In such a story there would seem to be no room for the Grail, the food-producing vessel. But we have more than one version of Perceval's visit to the castle of the Talismans, and, as we saw, his comrade Gawain likewise essays and partly

achieves the venture. As might be expected, the Gawain version is more primitive in tone, less affected by Christian symbolism than that in which Perceval figures. In one form (found in a German poem, *Diu Crone*, by Heinrich v. d. Türlin, which reproduces a lost French original), the inmates of the castle are in a Death in Life trance from which the hero's visit releases them; in another the partial achievement of the venture causes the heretofore desert land to bloom and blossom afresh. To this theme, the release from enchantment or unspelling quest as we may call it, the mysterious vessel of increase and plenty (the Grail) and the question are, it would seem, referable. The Grail here plays a twofold part; its inexhaustible food-producing qualities may be the means whereby the life of the lord of the castle is prolonged until the advent of his successor releases him from his vigil, or again, it may be regarded as a fertility talisman from which the land is debarred until the destined hero appears. In either case the result is to put the hero, directly or indirectly, in possession of a fertile land, and the question is the chief means by which the result is attained.

Thus at the back of our present Grail Quest stories lie, as we may conjecture, simple tales of which Perceval and Gawain (in Welsh, *Peredur* and *Gwalchmai*), were the heroes. In one the hero avenged the slaying of his father and the

harm done to his uncle (the prototype of *Sir Percyveller*); in another, by means of lance and sword he avenged the wrong done to uncle and cousin (prototype of the *Peredur*); another told how, penetrating to a magic castle within a waste and desert realm, he became master of a wonder-working talisman of fertility, and restored plenty to the land; in another, by aid of the same talisman he either restored a kinsman to health or released him from supernaturally prolonged life, and took his place.

At an early stage of their development these stories, crystallising as they did round the same hero, would have a tendency to influence each other, to become confused. From out the mass of varying, but only slightly varying narratives, a few main forms would emerge, differentiated by greater or less insistence upon the vengeance or the unspelling theme, but betraying, as a rule, the mixture of both. The unspelling conception, as the more definitely mythic of the two, would suffer most change; the more recondite significance of the old mythic talisman of increase and plenty would tend to disappear; its material food-producing properties would subsist, and this characteristic, as a matter of fact, is found in every version in which the Grail appears, in Crestien as in Wolfram, in the *Quête* as in *Perceval le Gallois*. The recondite significance of the machinery (the question) by

which the talisman is transferred to the hero's possession might likewise be expected to be lost, and, as a matter of fact, no version offers a satisfactory explanation, nor has any modern interpreter offered one that has won general acceptance. Thanks to the conservatism of story-tellers, it retained its place, but it became unintelligible. What relates to the vengeance conception, on the other hand, was retained in comparatively unchanged form; mythic it might be in origin and essence, yet its simply human character commended it as much to men of the twelfth century as to those of an earlier age. In the *Peredur* and in *Manessier* it has suffered little from contamination, but in *Crestien* and the remainder of the *Conte del Graal* it is subordinated to the unspelling quest, the Grail and question.

In the older Grail quests, though none is wholly free from the Christian element, yet that is, save in the *Parzival*, secondary; the knightly adventurous element predominates. It is otherwise in the later Grail quests (*Quête, Perceval le Gallois*). Here the Christian element dominates. The original sequence of incidents is boldly disregarded or radically modified; the original achiever of the quest, *Perceval*, is dispossessed by the new favourite in the Arthurian world, *Lancelot*, represented by his son *Galahad*. Naturally, the vengeance conception and the incidents by which it is embodied

disappear; naturally, all that relates to the fertility talisman itself (now fully identified with the sacramental vessel) is magnified; naturally, the unintelligible question is almost entirely dropped. But still, though caught up to very heaven, though filled with the essence of divinity, still the Grail retains the material characteristics of an increase and plenty talisman.

In assuming the existence of an original mass of non-Christian narratives from which the existing romances have derived a considerable portion of their subject matter, we rely, though not solely, upon the existence of the *Peredur* and the *Sir Percywelle*. If these do not represent a stage in the evolution of the Grail Quest romances older than and independent of the *Conte del Graal*, they must needs be derived from that work. How in that case account for the loss of the fertility talisman in the one tale (*Peredur*) and of everything relating to the unspelling quest in the other? Given common sense and absence of prejudice, the question answers itself. But even if these two versions had disappeared the assumption I have made would be legitimate. The Grail Quest romances are, in their extant form, inextricably bound up with the Arthur legend as a whole, and the Arthur legend rests for a very large part upon a basis of Celtic folk and hero tales, representatives of which may still be found in the older

heroic romances of both branches of the Celtic race, the Irish and the Welsh. Of these, the Irish is by far the older and richer, and the oldest portion of the Welsh is so closely connected with Irish legend as to give colour to the hypothesis that it is really due to an Irish population settled in Wales in prehistoric times, and gradually driven out or subjugated by the incoming Welshmen. It is in this old heroic and mythic romance that the closest parallels are found to numerous incidents and sequences of incidents frequently met with in the French Arthurian stories of the twelfth century, and, what is even more significant than parallelism of incident, there is parallelism of tone, of atmosphere, of the modes of conceiving and presenting the story as a whole. In no section of Arthurian romances are the minor parallelisms of incident with the older Celtic legends more frequent than in the Grail Quest stories, or is the parallelism of essential conception more intimate and striking.

Thus, old Celtic romance (Irish or Welsh) is largely concerned with a race of supernatural beings, the gods of the earliest Celtic Pantheon, and the mysterious wonderland in which they dwell. In Ireland they have retained a semi-divine aspect and attributes, they can shift shape at will, they are undying; in Wales they have come down to the level of powerful magicians. This race is in

possession of marvellous talismans, the chief of which is a symbol of fertility and increase in the shape of a cauldron which yields an inexhaustible supply of food to the taste of each partaker. In Irish myth this talisman, the cauldron of the Dagda—"a company used not ever to go away from it unsatisfied,"—is definitely associated with three other talismans, "the sword of Lug the Long-Handed" (the Irish sun-god), "the spear Lug used in battle," and the Lia Fail, or Stone of Destiny (now in the Coronation seat at Westminster Abbey) as the four precious objects which the god race brought with them when they first came to Ireland. A cauldron similar to that of the Dagda (the Irish Zeus) is also part of the gear of Manannan mac Lir (the Irish sea-god), and of Angus, son of the Dagda, the most potent magician of the immortal race. The dwelling places of these mysterious and powerful beings may, like the Grail Castle, be reached by mortals, but only chancewise and if the inmates are willing; like the Grail Castle they suddenly disappear from the ken of the mortal visitor, who finds himself lying on the bare hillside with no trace of the splendours he has witnessed. As in the Grail Castle, the visitor is feasted royally.

In Welsh romance the same magic cauldron appears. In one case it belongs to Bran, son of Llyr (a Welsh representative of the Irish god race), and here its healing and life-restoring powers are

dwelt upon. Such may well have been its attributes in some of those early tales underlying the existing Grail Quest which insisted rather upon the healing of the hero's kinsman than upon the restoration of his land to fertility. Elsewhere it is associated with other talismans of a decidedly mythical character, and is, like the Grail, celebrated alike for its material and its spiritual properties—it is a producer of food, but also of inspiration and ecstasy.

The conception that the welfare of a land may be so bound up with that of its ruler that his evil conduct, or simply his misfortune, may entail famine or desolation, and conversely that his merit or luck may ensure prosperity, is familiar in Irish heroic legend. So also is the conception that the supernatural powers may curse a land with sterility and restore it again to fertility. In Welsh legend magic is the agent, and the Welsh mythic romance, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*, tells of Pryderi, and how his land was subjected by an enemy to an illusion, "where they were wont to see cattle and herds, and dwellings, they saw nothing now, neither house nor beast, nor smoke, nor fire, nor man, nor dwelling, but the houses of the Court empty and desolate, without either man or beast within them." From this illusion, as well as from imprisonment in a magic castle which vanishes as soon as he penetrates

within it, Pryderi and his land are delivered by Manawyddan, son of Llyr (the Welsh counterpart of the Irish sea-god).

In a similar way the conception of a hero urged to the accomplishment of his task by a kinsman lying under enchantment until it is accomplished is also familiar in early Irish romance. It is indeed a conception of world-wide spread, but the Celtic presentment has distinguishing features. A lucky accident has preserved the fragment of an Irish folk story dating back to the tenth century at the latest, in which the bespelled kinsman appears in a hideous guise described in terms which strikingly recall the hideous damsel of the *Conte del Graal* (the hero's cousin, as we learn from the *Peredur*).

It goes without saying that an archaic state of society such as that of mediæval Ireland and Wales laid the utmost stress upon the duty of blood vengeance, and that stories with this theme are common. A famous Irish example is the tale entitled "The Fate of the Children of Turenn," which recounts the tasks imposed by Lug the Long-Handed (the Irish sun-god) upon the slayers of his father. Among these tasks was the winning of a poisonous irresistible spear.

Reference to these early Celtic tales supplies the only hint of an explanation which has yet been suggested of the mysterious question. Their heroes are commonly subject to mysterious spells con-

straining them to do certain actions, or forbidding them from others, under penalty of disaster or death if they infringe the spell. With the Irish story-teller the *geis*, as the spell is called, plays much the same part as Nemesis in Greek myth ; it is the controlling, over-mastering power. It may be conjectured that an injunction of this kind was laid upon the questing hero in one of the tales out of which the romances have grown ; that he was constrained to use certain formalities in the accomplishment of his task, or had imposed upon him certain disabilities, and that this feature, misunderstood as it inevitably would be by twelfth century story-tellers, is reflected in the question incident as we have it.

This series of parallels could be greatly extended if, passing from the salient incidents of the Grail Quest, to which alone I have here been able to call attention, the secondary traits and episodes of the romances were made the subject of comparison. As might be expected, these have been less affected by intruding Christian symbolism, and in consequence they betray their close affinity to the archaic Irish and Welsh tales in a most marked manner. But enough has been instanced, I trust, to demonstrate that the texture, the colouring, the essential conception of the older Grail Quest stories, can be paralleled from early Celtic mythic romance, and, I may add, from no other contemporary

European literature ; if the reference to Celtic romance be discarded, but one alternative remains, namely, that the French story-tellers of the twelfth century made up this fantastic Arthurian realm of eerie glamour out of their own heads.

We may thus feel assured that the talismans themselves, that the quest for them, and the use to which they were put, existed in stories older than and unaffected by Christianity. We note the significant fact that two of the talismans, vessel of plenty and death-dealing spear, are part of the gear of the early Celtic gods, gods who also figure as engaged in laying under sterilising spells the realms of their opponents, whether of their own divine race or belonging to that of men. In so far as these objects could, before their Christian transformation, be charged with mysterious and awe-inspiring potency, in so far as these tales of magic strife could be invested with traditional sanctity, this was the case. It was no simple peasant's tale that came ultimately into the hands of the Christian story-teller, but one elaborated by the bardic class, the jealous guardians, alike in Ireland and in Wales, of the racial mythic and heroic traditions.

We have now briefly surveyed the *corpus* of Grail romances and have found it to consist of Celtic pre-Christian mythic tales (involving ultimately the fates and struggles of gods and demi-

gods), fused with tales which had as their object the glorification of Britain in their account of the illustrious origin and pre-eminent privileges of the Christian Church in these islands. Before this fusion took place the Celtic tales, originally mythic, had been largely heroicised; hero had supplanted demi-god. Yet they retained enough of the primitive intent and content to lend themselves to the creative impulse of the new and higher mythology. The Pagan vessel of increase, plenty and ecstasy was not so far emptied of its pristine significance, but that it could be reshaped as the holiest relic of Christendom, or be identified, by Robert de Borron, with the body of the dead and risen Lord; the Achiever of the Quest was not so oblivious of his primitive mythic status as to be unfitted for the approximation, vaguely suggested by Wolfram and the *Quête*, of his career to that of the Saviour.

But if, thus broadly surveyed, the general development of the stories clustering round the precious talisman may be summed up as the gradual transformation of old Celtic mythic tales into a legend charged with Christian symbolism and mysticism, many stages in this process remain obscure. What suggested the fusion of stories of a hero questing after talismans with those of the evangelisers of Britain? Were these latter, as has been suggested, possessors of the holy vessel

before that fusion took place? If so, what was the form which the conversion legend had assumed, and how was it affected by, and how did it affect the quest story after the twain had been welded into one?

The conversion legend started, it is urged, with Joseph. The forty years' solitary captivity is an essential feature of the Joseph legend. The question naturally arose—how was he kept in life? by a wonderful food-producing vessel of the kind familiar in the folklore of nearly every race, a vessel naturally and progressively identified with the receptacle of Christ's blood, with the dish, and then with the cup of the Last Supper. To guard such a precious relic and to exhibit alike the mysteries of the Trinity and the Sacrament, the three Grail-keepers were imagined: Joseph, Brons, the grandson of Brons; the three tables were instituted: that of the Last Supper with its place left empty by Judas' betrayal; Joseph's table, on which figures the Grail; Arthur's Table Round, with its empty seat to be filled only by the last of the Grail-keepers.

Such a legend would naturally tend to centre round the precious vessel, to exalt it more and more. When a lucky chance suggested the identification of the last Grail-keeper, the filler of the empty seat, the final accomplisher of the dramatic action started centuries before in Palestine, with

the young hero who quested forth in search, he, too, of a precious vessel, and thereby delivered his kinsmen and released their land from enchantment, the two vessels (in their ultimate origin the same) were also fully identified, with the result of strengthening such non-Christian characteristics as still survived in the Christianised vessel of the conversion legend. Thence onwards, the legend developed as each individual writer was attracted by the religious or by the knightly adventurous element, and in accordance with his capacity to shape these different elements so as to set forth his conception.

Ingenious as this hypothesis is, it leaves out of account *why* the conversion legend was associated with personages of the Arthurian cycle. Rather, I think, must the precious vessel be regarded as foreign to the Joseph conversion legend until after this association had taken place. What, then, gave rise to it? I can only point out that Borron's form of the conversion legend betrays not alone Celtic affinities (that inevitably followed once the evangelisers set foot in Celtic Britain), but specific Arthurian affinities in the mention of Avalon as the goal of the Grail host, a mention which Borron himself did not understand, so that even if the Arthurian machinery of the *Merlin*—the establishment of the Round Table in imitation of that of the Grail table—be ascribed to Borron,

yet the fusion of conversion and Arthur legends must have begun before his time. Avalon is the Welsh form of the old Celtic Elysium, of which vivid and detailed descriptions have survived in Irish literature; an Elysium closely allied to the dwelling-places of the Celtic god-race, the owners of the inexhaustible food cauldron of the Dagda, of the Spear and Sword of Lug, the race represented in Wales by the Children of Llyr and Don. Second only in importance to Joseph in Borron's poem are his kinsmen, Brons and Alain, who bear distinctively Celtic names. Brons recalls the Welsh Bran, son of Llyr, possessor, in the Welsh tale of Branwen, of a cauldron of healing and rejuvenation, himself transported after his death on earth to an Elysium, where he continued a mystic life; when slain in battle, his comrades, at his bidding, cut off his head, and with it retire to Gwales in Penvro, where they pass fourscore years, "unconscious of having spent a time more joyous and mirthful . . . it was not more irksome to them having the head with them than if Blessed Bran had been with them himself." At the end of the fourscore years infringing an injunction which Bran had laid upon them, and becoming aware of the flight of time and of all their past woe, they bury their lord's head near London, and so long as it remained concealed the isle of Britain was free from invasion. At a date which is uncertain, but of which, at least,

no definite trace exists prior to the late thirteenth century, Bran was made the hero in Wales of a conversion legend, which may embody old tradition but may, on the other hand, be a reflex of the Grail romances, though, if so, it is the only trace in Welsh of any knowledge of Borron's version. In support of its embodying old tradition is the fact that, as just cited, in the tale of Branwen, the redaction of which goes back to the eleventh century, Bran has the epithet Blessed. This originally Pagan epithet, doubtless applied to him as possessor of the rejuvenation cauldron, may have been the starting-point of a legend ascribing to him a share in the introduction of Christianity into Britain.

Taking all these indications into existence, it seems most likely that Borron, or rather the sources he followed, became acquainted with a *Bran* conversion legend, and fused it with the better-known *Joseph* one. In this way Bran's precious vessel would become associated with Joseph. True we only know of it from the Welsh tale of Branwen as a rejuvenation and healing talisman, but this conception is closely allied to that of a talisman of increase and plenty, and, as a matter of fact, it is found also in the Grail romances, though less insisted upon than the other. Moreover, we only know of one aspect of Bran's cauldron from our Welsh tale, because only one

form of its power is there brought into play ; the merest fragment of Welsh mythic romance has come down to us, and it is folly to argue as if what we do not find in that fragment cannot have existed.

The fusion of the two conversion legends would undoubtedly be facilitated by the fact of the localisation of the Joseph legend at Glastonbury. This ancient seat of British Christianity was at some unknown date identified with Avalon ; the texts which have preserved this identification are comparatively late, and the identification has been ascribed to the influence of the romances. Undoubtedly the story as we have it bears traces of the efforts made during Henry the Second's reign to utilise the Celtic legends for political purposes. But the first germ of the conception that a venerable sanctuary of the Christian faith in Britain had succeeded, as it were, to the attributes of the wonderland of the Celtic gods must be far older than Henry's reign—older, indeed, than the twelfth century.

The fusion of a Brons and a Joseph conversion legend (a fusion, be it noted, which could take place in Britain and in Britain alone) would not only permit the introduction of the precious vessel into the latter, it would almost inevitably bring it into contact with the Arthur cycle. The latter is largely made up of heroicised versions of themes

and incidents which had figured at an earlier date in mythic romance, and it had drawn many of the personages of the older mythic world within its grasp. In this way the connection between the hero legend of Arthur, defender of Britain against heathen invaders, and the religious legend of the evangelisers of Britain would be established naturally, and so as to allow of, nay, to invite, further development.

Assuming, then, that prior to Crestien's time, the two portions of the legend had been welded into a more or less compact whole, and that the Quest talismans had thereby acquired Christian attributes and properties, the question arises how far the process of fusion had been carried, and in what way it was affected by Crestien's work. Did the French poet find in his source any such coherent account of the early history of the Grail and lance as is yielded either by Robert de Borron, or by the rival version of the *Grand St. Graal-Quête*? If Crestien's continuators got their information from his source, that source must likewise have been the fountain-head of the *Grand St. Graal-Quête*. Crestien would in that case seem to have deliberately left in abeyance the definite religious element of his source, and to have devoted himself to the elaboration of the knightly adventurous portion. For, even if at his hero's second visit to the Grail Castle he had given the information we

now find in his continuators, the religious aspect of his work would still be pale and slight in comparison with the adventurous. But whether the continuators of Crestien did resort to the latter's source is extremely doubtful in view of the marked divergence in the conduct of the story between both Manessier and Gerbert, and the poet whose work they were completing. Nor can the question be decided without reference to Wolfram's source, the lost French poem of Guiot. Two hypotheses respecting this are possible. It may have been, as is now more commonly assumed, composed within a few years after Crestien's death with a view to giving a complete version of the story he had left incomplete. If so, and if Crestien's source had contained either form of the Early History in as an advanced stage of development as in Robert de Borron, or to *Grand St. Graal*, would, or could Guiot have discarded it? He could have made it subservient to the greater glory of the Angevin princes as easily as the version which he offers; he could have adapted it as readily to the moral and spiritual conceptions which animate his work. If, on the other hand, Guiot's poem is older than that of Crestien, it is probably nearer to the common source of both in its lesser insistence upon the Christian machinery derived from the Conversion legend, although, thanks to the poet's personality, it is animated

by a far deeper and more spiritual Christian feeling.

Thus, although both Crestien's and Guiot's accounts of the Grail seem to presuppose its previous identification not only with the receptacle of Christ's blood, but also with the sacramental cup (as evidenced in Guiot's case by the fact that the power of the Grail is renewed by a Host), it is unlikely that such a full and coherent form of the Early History as we find in the later romances was accessible to them. It may rather be conjectured that the stress they laid upon the knightly adventurous element in the story led other writers to elaborate the Early History by way of accentuating the religious element.

The real achievement of Crestien and Guiot, the decisive influence they exerted upon the evolution of the cycle, lay in their conception and presentment of the Quest. Substantially the non-Christian framework and texture, with all their fascinating charm and variety, are retained, but the story is lifted on to a loftier moral and intellectual plane, and thereby enabled to hold its own against the competition of the purely Christian portion of the legend. This intellectualising, spiritualising process is far more developed in Guiot than in Crestien, and it is a matter for profound regret that, as ingeniously surmised by Dr. Wechssler, the Angevin (*i.e.* English) tendencies of Guiot's poem brought it into disfavour

in France as soon as the French royal house had got the better of its formidable rivals. Had it been otherwise, had Henry II. been succeeded by a son wise and able as himself, and England thereby secured the hegemony of the French-speaking world, Guiot, instead of Crestien, might have yielded the standard, the dominant version of the Quest. As it is, we must at least be thankful that his work fell into the hands of a man as well fitted as was Wolfram to appreciate its moral and spiritual aims.

We can measure the service rendered by these two great poets to the story of the Grail Quest by comparing their work with the aimless and rambling jumble of disconnected adventures found in the continuations of Crestien.

The after development of the cycle, though presenting numberless problems of detail, is yet fairly clear in its main outline. Crestien and Guiot made the Grail Quest story fashionable as much by their skill in relating the marvellous feats and ventures of the hero as by the moral and spiritual aim of their work. One set of following writers simply worked such veins of the knightly adventurous mine as have been left unexploited by the two great poets; others elaborated the distinctively Christian portion, the Early History; others, again, fused the two, more or less maladroitly. But the normal development of the cycle was profoundly modified

by influences which were modifying the entire body of Arthurian romance. To understand the later versions of the Quest we must realise the nature of these influences.

In the earliest stages of the Arthurian cycle the pre-eminent hero is Gawain, who is also second only to Perceval as hero of the Quest story. Perceval's rank in the latter gave him a position in the Arthurian world, generally, inferior only to that of Gawain. At a later stage both were superseded by Lancelot, who became the acknowledged mirror and exemplar of chivalry. To attain this position Gawain had to be degraded, and a sure test of the age of any given Arthurian text is yielded by the view it presents of Gawain's character. Lancelot owed his pre-eminence to the fact that he became, as the Queen's lover, the exemplar of the ideal of courtly love. But this very ideal provoked what may be called a Puritan reaction among a certain section of romance-writers, who eagerly sought out whatever might yield matter for an opposing ideal of ascetic life. The Perceval Quest was thus rewritten by the author of *Perceval le Gallois* in a spirit of militant asceticism; the hero's virginity is insisted upon aggressively. But the progress of Lancelot towards the headship, after Arthur, of the Arthurian world kept pace with the increasing favour shown towards the Grail Quest as the most marvellous "branch"

of the whole Arthurian cycle. A time must naturally come when Arthur's mightiest hero could no longer be kept out of the chief venture of Arthur's Court. Yet when that time came the Puritan reaction had fixed a deep chasm between the two sets of tendency exhibited in the cycle—the knightly amorous and the spiritual ascetic. How could Lancelot, the Queen's lover, be permitted even to view, much less to become possessed of, the holy vessel into which by this time the full potency of sacramental mysticism had been poured? Yet how could he, pattern of knighthood, be excluded from its blessings? The dilemma was solved, the chasm was bridged by the creation of Lancelot's son Galahad, in whom was exemplified in a yet more uncompromising, yet more inhuman spirit the ideal of militant asceticism imperfectly set forth by the author of *Perceval le Gallois*. In this way arose and took shape the Galahad Quest of the *Grand St. Graal-Quête*. It is possible that the writers of these romances may have embodied some earlier features, possible that they may have built up their hero round the personality of some forgotten hero of the Arthurian cycle; but in his very essence, as in the major part of his adventures, Galahad is emphatically the latest comer in the world of Arthurian romance.

Only a word need be said about *Sir Percyveller*

and the *Peredur*. The former reproduced, with hardly a trace of the prodigious development which had taken place, one of the pre-Christian component stories of the Grail Quest; the second, the Welsh tale, reproduced another pre-Christian component form accurately, as regards the essence of the story, but with a considerable amount of ornamental detail taken from Crestien and other French sources. As a rule, this extraneous matter remains simple ornament, but at times it obscures and distorts the march of the story.

Such, all too briefly sketched, has been the development of the Grail cycle from the time when legends relating the evangelisation of Britain were brought into contact with heroified versions, belonging to the Arthur cycle, of older mythic tales. The composite legend thus formed, lived and flourished because it was composite, because it drew sustenance and spirit from the two worlds the fusion of which constitutes Modern Europe, the world of Christian classic culture, and the older barbaric world which that culture was to transform, but by which it was also to be itself transformed. The most diverse types of spiritual and artistic intelligence could thus find sustenance for their imaginings. The magic talisman of the Celtic gods, the Holiest Relic of Christian faith, gave to each "the food he

most desired." Its bounty is not exhausted though countless generations have fed from it. Within the last fifty years this marvellous legend has proved as fertile in the mind of genius, as it was eight hundred years ago, to set forth and typify the longings and ideals of humanity.

NOTES

THE object of the present Series of Popular Studies is as much to assist those who are anxious to pursue a special line of study as to give an accurate summary of any particular subject to those who do not wish for more than a general knowledge of it. In the present instance the second intention is almost impossible to realise in view of the enormous mass and great complexity of the subject-matter. All the more, therefore, do I trust that I may be able to induce many of my readers to take up the study of the Grail cycle. There is only one way of setting about this, and that is to read the romances themselves. Luckily, several of the most important are easily accessible to the English reader. The PEREDUR, the most archaic form of the Quest story, may be read in my edition of the *Mabinogion*; Wolfram's PARZIVAL, the finest example of the Quest story as transformed by Christian influence, in Miss Weston's translation (2 vols. 10s. 6d.); the PERCEVAL LE GALLOIS, the transitional bridge between the knightly hero of Crestien-Guiot and the ascetic hero of the later legend, in Dr. Evans' exquisite translation (*The High History of the Holy Grail*, 2 vols. 4s.); and the QUÊTE DU ST. GRAAL, the final outcome of Puritan asceticism, in Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* (best read in Dr. Sommer's faithful reprint of Caxton's text, 2 vols. 7s. 6d., in which it occupies Books 13-18). When these four versions have been mastered, the main

lines of development will be clear, and attention can be given to the remaining works of the cycle. Of these, the GRAND ST. GRAAL and the DIDOT PERCEVAL are accessible in Hucher's *Le Saint-Graal ou le Joseph d'Arimathie*, 3 vols., 1875-78 (£1 10s.). A fifteenth-century metrical English adaptation of the GRAND ST. GRAAL has likewise been edited by Dr. Furnivall: *Seynt Graal; or, the Sank Ryal*, 2 vols., 1861-63 (printed for the Roxburghe Club), but this is only accessible to frequenters of large libraries; moreover, the reader who has a fair knowledge of modern French will, after a few days' work, find the thirteenth-century prose of the French original easier to understand than the fifteenth-century verse of the English adaptation. Borron's poem is printed in Furnivall's *Seynt Graal*.

SIR PERCYVELLE is accessible in Halliwell's edition: *The Thornton Romances*, 1884, printed for the Camden Society. Unfortunately the chief work of the cycle, the CONTE DEL GRAAL, is practically inaccessible, only 100 copies having been printed of the only edition, that of M. Potvin, 6 vols., Mons, 1866-71. Professor Baist is engaged upon a new edition. Readers who can consult one of the few copies extant in England, and who have a fair knowledge of modern French, will not find Crestien very difficult, less so than is Chaucer to the average well-educated Englishman.

As regards the literature of the subject, there are only two works to which the reader can be referred for full and accurate summaries of the romances: Birch-Hirschfeld, *Die Sage vom Gral*, 1877, and my own *Studies on the Legend of the Holy Grail*, 1888. This latter, the only work accessible to readers unacquainted with German, is now out of print. The only other work dealing with the cycle as a whole, Prof. R. Heinzel's *Die französischen Gralromane*, a monument of erudition and ingenuity, is useless to all but advanced students, the "senior wranglers" of the study. Dr. E. Wechssler has done

excellent work in determining the relation to each other of the existing prose romances, and in tracing their development (*Die verschiedenen Redaktionen der Graal-Lancelot Cyklus*, 1895), and his *Sage v. heil. Gral*, 1898, which contains a useful bibliography, and many acute and valuable suggestions might be recommended if it did not present the author's hypothetical view of the development of the legend (a view entirely untenable in parts) in such a way as to lead the unknowing reader to imagine that it set forth the evidence of the texts.

Other works will be mentioned as occasion offers.

CRESTIEN'S DATE. (Page 6.)

This has been best fixed by Wechssler, *Sage v. h. G.*, par. 63.

WOLFRAM'S PARZIVAL. (Page 11.)

The most perplexing and obscure problems of the Grail literature are connected with this poem. In addition to Miss Weston's translation, the following should be consulted, in addition to the works cited, *Studies*, p. 261: Hagen, *Parzival-Studien*, 1892; Golther, *Lohengrin* (Rom. Forschungen, V. 1890); Lichtenstein, *Zur Parzivalfrage* (Paul u. Braune, Beitr. 1897); Hertz' admirable modern German adaptation of Wolfram's *Parzival*, 1898.

THE CONTINUATORS OF CRESTIEN. (Page 9.)

The following may be consulted: H. Waitz, *Die Fortsetzungen v. Crestien's P. le Gallois*, 1890.

The statements on the subject in my *Studies* must be supplemented and corrected from this work.

DATE OF GRAND ST. GRAAL. (Page 27.)

Up to 1898, the date of 1204, assumed to be that in which Helinandus finished his Chronicle, was accepted as

a *terminus ad quem* for the GRAND ST. GRAAL, or for its source. Dr. Evans, *High History*, ii. p. 293, has shown that Helinandus wrote about 1220.

PERCEVAL LE GALLOIS. (Page 34.)

This has been recently studied by Dr. Nitze, *The old French Grail Romance of Perlesvaus*. Baltimore, 1902.

THE JOSEPH LEGEND. (Page 41.)

The chief discussion of the Glastonbury legend is that of Prof. G. Baist, *Zeitschrift für Rom. Philologie*, xix.

Prof. Wülcker, *Das Evangelium Nicodemi in der abendländischen Literatur*, 1872, has shown the early knowledge of this apocryphal work in England.

GLASTONBURY AND AVALON. (Page 42.)]

Cf. M. Ferd Lot : *Glastonbury et Avalon*, in *Romania*, vol. xxvii.

THE GRAIL KNIGHTS AND THE TEMPLARS. (Page 48.)

The special modification of the Grail Quest with a view of connecting it more closely with the Temple knighthood found in Guiot-Wolfram is undoubtedly bound up with a number of Oriental traits and features only met with in the *Parzival*. These lend colour to the hypothesis that Guiot had himself been in the East, and become acquainted with many Eastern legends, and also that he was in some way attached to the Temple order.

These Oriental traits in the *Parzival* have misled certain scholars into imagining an Eastern origin for the Grail legend. The last statement of this view is Prof. A. Wesselovsky's : *Archiv f. Slav. Philologie*, 1901.

Cf. Dr. P. Hagen's valuable *Der Gral*, 1900.

CELTIC ELEMENTS IN THE GRAIL LEGEND.

(Pages 55-59.)

In my *Studies* I chiefly dwelt upon the Irish analogies and parallels. Prof. Rhys in his *Arthurian Legend*, 1891, brought into prominence the Welsh parallels, notably the enchantment of Pryderi's land with the wasting of the realm of the Fisher King (Perceval's uncle).

THE BESPELLED AND AIDING KINSMAN. (Page 58.)

This instance, from *Cormac's Glossary*, an Irish compilation of the 10th-11th centuries, is cited and discussed by me, *Waifs and Strays of Celtic Tradition*, 1890, vol. ii., p. 467.

THE QUESTION. (Page 58.)

My explanation of this as due to misunderstanding of an original *geis* (pronounced *gess*) is strengthened by the kinship between the Lohengrin (Swan Knight) and Grail story. For in Lohengrin the supernatural hero is under a *geis* not to reveal his name, and the infringement of this tabu ensures his withdrawal to his own land. Now the oldest known instance of [the theme of a supernatural wife, or husband, who imposes injunctions the infringement of which is fatal, is found in Ireland, in the well-known story entitled *Noinden Ulad* (the Feebleness of the Ulstermen).

Cf. Miss Hull's *Cuchullin Saga*, p. 96.

(Pages 62, 63.)

The two paragraphs are a summary of Dr. Wechssler's argument, *Sage v. heil. Gral*, pp. 12-18. I agree with the argument, save when I express dissent from it.

GUIOT AND CRESTIEN. (Page 68.)

Miss Weston is the chief advocate of Guiot's priority. I think she is right.

LANCELOT. (Pages 71, 72.)

Cf. Miss Weston's *Legend of Sir Lancelot du Lac*, 1901,
on which this paragraph is based.

(Page 74.)

I allude of course, to Richard Wagner's *Parsifal*.

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P R E F A C E

THE aim of the present study is to show how the medieval saga of Dietrich of Bern gradually developed from its origins in History and Mythology, and at the same time to give the reader some idea of the character of the various poems which, together with the Thidrekssaga, comprise the Dietrich Cycle.

Owing to the undesirability of encumbering with foot-notes a popular study such as this is meant to be, I have refrained on the one hand from touching on various interesting, but for my immediate purpose unessential, points, and on the other from quoting in each case the investigators who first put forward the theories here adopted. I must therefore take this opportunity of expressing my indebtedness to both recent and older research, and more especially to the works mentioned in the Bibliography. The Bibliography does not, however, aim at completeness in this or any other respect, but has been selected merely with a view to opening the door to any who

may desire to pursue the subject further. All such will find the fullest possible bibliographical information in the works quoted.

My best thanks are also due to Professor Fiedler, Dr. Breul, and Mr. Alfred Nutt, for reading the proofs and making many valuable suggestions.

F. E. SANDBACH.

BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY,
November 27, 1905.

THE HEROIC SAGA-CYCLE OF DIETRICH OF BERN

It may safely be said that, outside a select circle of scholars and students of folk-lore and romance, the saga-cycle of Dietrich of Bern is all but unknown in this country. Unlike the well-known story of Siegfried, that of Dietrich was never wrought into a noble epic like the *Nibelungenlied*, nor has it chanced to fire the poetic fancy of a William Morris or a Wagner. And yet Dietrich's fame was in the Middle Ages more widely spread and longer lived than Siegfried's, while for modern readers a saga-cycle having for its central figure the brilliant Gothic king Theoderic the Great should be hardly less interesting than that of Charlemagne. At first sight, it is true, Dietrich and Theoderic appear to have so little in common, except the name, that even Wilhelm Grimm doubted their identity; yet this very fact lends an additional fascination to the study of the development of the saga, and its explanation affords

an unusually instructive example of the growth of saga in general.

Thanks to the ancient historians, we are tolerably well informed about Theoderic's life, a short outline of which must form the basis for any study of the Dietrich cycle.

On the collapse of the Hunnish Empire after Attila's death in 453 A.D., the Ostrogoths, under their king Walamer, of the royal Amelung race, became once more independent. Dwelling in Pannonia, between the Danube and the Drave, their territory bordered that of the Eastern Empire, and the Emperor Marcian found it advisable to conclude a treaty, by the terms of which Walamer and his two brothers, Theodemer and Widemer, undertook to protect the frontier in return for a money subsidy. Marcian's successor Leo, however, stopped the payment of this subsidy, and in 462 Walamer invaded Illyria. As a result the treaty was renewed, and Walamer handed over, as a hostage for the fulfilment of his part of the bargain, his nephew Theoderic, then eight years of age.

For ten years Theoderic remained at the Byzantine court, where he received a Roman education and learned to appreciate the advantages of civilisation; but in 472 he returned to his own country, where his father Theodemer had suc-

ceeded Walamer. Two years later the Ostrogoths left Pannonia and settled in Macedonia under the Eastern Emperor's protection, and in the same year Theodemer died and was succeeded by his son.

The opening years of Theoderic's reign gave little promise of its final splendour, and were spent, for the most part, in migration from province to province and continual fighting, now on one side, now on the other, in the series of civil wars that followed the accession of the Emperor Zeno. At last, however, with Theoderic's help, Zeno made his position finally secure, and was able to turn his attention to the Western Empire. Since the sack of Rome by the Vandals under Genseric the Western Emperors had been mere puppets in the hands of their Germanic generals, and the last of them, Romulus Augustulus, had been deposed in 480 by Odoacer, who had from that time ruled in Italy as an independent king. He had, indeed, recognised the justice of Zeno's claim to the Western throne, and had assumed the title of Patrician of the Eastern Empire, but more than this nominal recognition of suzerainty Zeno had not yet been able to extort.

In 488, therefore, he commissioned Theoderic to wrest Italy from the usurper. Much reduced in numbers, but still formidable, the Ostrogoths set out, some quarter of a million men, women,

and children, on their long and difficult march from Moesia to Italy. Frequently delayed by sickness and by the hostility of the tribes through whose countries they had to pass, it was not until the summer of the next year that they crossed the Alps and arrived at the Isonzo, Odoacer's frontier. In August 489 they forced the passage of the river, and a month later inflicted on Odoacer a second defeat in the battle of Verona.

Odoacer now took refuge in the fortress of Ravenna, while large numbers of his followers deserted to Theoderic. Among these was Tufa, who, having succeeded in winning the victor's confidence, offered to lead a strong force against his former master. By his own desire he was accompanied by several of Theoderic's principal officers, but on meeting Odoacer at Favenzia he returned to his old allegiance and sent the Ostrogoth officers in chains to Ravenna. The other deserters from Odoacer's army now flocked back to their former standard, and Theoderic's situation became desperate. Odoacer had, indeed, succeeded in shutting him in in Pavia when an army of Visigoths from southern Gaul came to his assistance. The siege was raised, and Odoacer, defeated in a battle on the banks of the Adda, was forced to take refuge once more in Ravenna. For two years the fortress held out, but it finally capitulated in 493. By the

terms of surrender, the lives of the defenders were to be spared, but Theoderic, suspecting, it is said, a plot against his life, had Odoacer and all his kinsmen put to death.

Theoderic was now master of Italy, which once more, under his wise and just government, enjoyed the blessings of peace and order, and regained some measure of its former prosperity. In spite of the nominal allegiance he owed to the Eastern Emperor, he was looked up to by all Germanic tribes as the greatest and most powerful of their kings, and his advice and protection were constantly in request. On his death in 526 he was buried in a magnificent marble tomb at Ravenna. This may still be seen, but Theoderic's remains have disappeared, unless, indeed, the skeleton in golden armour found some fifty years ago, in a rough grave not far away, is that of the great Gothic king. Himself an Arian, like all his race, he was hated as a heretic by the Roman Church, and some generations after his death his tomb was violated under cover of night. Though his porphyry coffin was found next morning at the door of a neighbouring monastery, no traces of his body could be discovered, and it seems possible that the riflers of his tomb were sectarian fanatics, who, having no desire to rob the corpse, hastily interred it in the grave in which the armour-clad skeleton was found.

10 THE HEROIC SAGA-CYCLE OF

Such is, in brief, the history of Theoderic the Great,¹ so far as it concerns us here. To his own people he was deservedly a national hero, and no doubt his exploits, especially those belonging to the thirty or more years of exile and wandering between his departure for the Byzantine court and his final victory at Ravenna, formed the themes of epic songs. But popular tradition never remains long in strict accord with history. The popular imagination is ever ready to see its heroes in the most favourable light; it has no accurate memory for details; it removes remembered characters and events from their forgotten historical setting, and forms new and historically impossible connections. In the case of our saga these tendencies were accentuated by the subsequent course of history. Within less than thirty years from Theoderic's death the Eastern Emperor Justinian had reconquered Italy. The great majority of the Ostrogoths perished in the course of the war, and the remainder were either absorbed in the Italian population or took refuge in neighbouring Germanic kingdoms. From this time on, therefore, the saga owed its development to tribes to whom it no longer represented the

¹ A fuller account will be found in E. Gibbon's classical *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, in which the chief authorities are quoted; in H. Bradley, *The Goths* ("Story of the Nations" Series); and in T. Hodgkin, *Theoderic the Goth* ("Heroes of the Nation" Series).

national history, with the result that in course of time the actual facts were distorted almost beyond recognition.

The oldest version of the saga of which we have any evidence is that which forms the background to the fragmentary *Hildebrandslied*, the one remnant we possess of the once rich store of ancient German hero-songs. The rest, including even Charlemagne's collection of Frankish ballads, were ruthlessly destroyed by the zealous Christian clergy; no doubt we owe the almost miraculous preservation of this one fragment to the fortunate chance that, early in the ninth century, two Fuldese monks made a copy of it on the inside cover of a prayer-book. Who they were is not known, but it is a curious coincidence that there were at Fulda at that time two monks named Hiltibrant and Haduprant. Possibly they felt a special interest in their namesakes in the poem and deserve the credit for its preservation.

The *Hildebrandslied*, like the Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf*, is a remnant of the ancient Germanic alliterative poetry, and has for its theme, like the Persian story of Sohrab and Rustem, the meeting of father and son in mortal combat. This story, which appears to have been known to all the Indo-European nations, and which is therefore probably older than their separation

from the parent stock, was originally independent, but was, in Germany, attached to the saga of Theoderic.

It is thirty years, the poem tells us, since Dietrich (the High German equivalent of Theoderic) was driven from his own kingdom by Otacher (Odoacer) and, accompanied by his faithful vassal Hildebrand, took refuge at Attila's court. Now, at last, he returns at the head of a powerful army to win back his possessions; his forces meet those of Otacher, and Hildebrand finds himself face to face with his son Hadubrant, who had been left behind in his mother's care. Hadubrant refuses to believe that the aged warrior is indeed his father, news of whose death he has heard from seafarers. In vain does Hildebrand attempt to convince his son of the truth; even the offer of golden armlets excites in the youth's mind only a suspicion of treachery, and the older man sees that a tragedy can no longer be averted. The combat begins. With levelled lances they crash together, then dismount and fight with sword and shield; they hew great pieces from each other's bucklers—and there the fragment ends.

Conflicting views have been held as to the outcome of the fight. But though in later

versions (e.g. in the *Thidrekssaga* and the so-called *Younger Hildebrandslied* of the fourteenth century) the father conquers and spares his son, these have a character entirely different from that of the Old High German poem. The tone of the latter is tragic throughout, and it is now generally accepted that it must have ended with the death of the son.

The poem concerns us here, however, only in so far as it helps us to trace the development of the Dietrich saga. The date of the original composition of the *Hildebrandslied* is very uncertain, but it is generally ascribed to the commencement of the eighth century, some two hundred years after Theoderic's death. In these two hundred years the story has become almost unrecognisable, all that remains of historical fact being the struggle between Theoderic and Odoacer and, presumably, the defeat of the latter.

It is easy to understand that Zeno's name should have disappeared from the story, and that Dietrich should consequently be represented as acting entirely on his own behalf. Much more difficult to account for is the conception that the hero of the saga had been first driven from his possessions by Odoacer and had lived for thirty years in exile at Attila's court. But it must be remembered that the development of this form

of the saga was due not to the Ostrogoths themselves—they had ceased to exist as a nation within thirty years of Theoderic's death—but to other Germanic races. To them Theoderic was the hero of epic songs, and nothing more; in Ostrogothic history they had little or no interest, and such isolated facts as chanced to be remembered would be connected with the developing saga in whatever way seemed most suitable, and without much regard to chronology. We should therefore naturally expect to find the saga considerably at variance with history. The fact that it became a story of expulsion, exile, and return—a theme common enough in hero-saga—may be ascribed, with much probability, to a vague recollection of at least three historical facts: (1) Odoacer's deposition of the last Western Emperor; (2) the tributary relationship of the Ostrogoths to the Huns until Attila's death; (3) the interval of thirty years between Theoderic's departure from home to the Byzantine court and his acquisition of a kingdom by his final victory over Odoacer at Ravenna.

Of these three historical facts the last two may have suggested the idea and determined the place (Attila's court) and the duration of Dietrich's exile, while the first offers a possible explanation of the growth of a tradition of expulsion followed by a period of exile and eventually

by Dietrich's victorious return. The emperor deposed by Odoacer was a mere boy, otherwise unknown to history. We may assume, therefore, that he was soon forgotten, and that the one fact remembered was that Odoacer had gained his throne by usurpation. As the epic songs narrating Theoderic's struggle with Odoacer spread from the Ostrogoths to other tribes, nothing would be more likely than that Theoderic should have been identified with the victim of Odoacer's usurpation and looked upon as eventually recovering what was rightfully his own. Possibly, too, the general belief in the correctness of this version of the cause of enmity between Theoderic and Odoacer was strengthened by the tradition of a previous Gothic settlement in Italy (based on Alaric's invasion early in the fifth century). In view of this tradition the idea that Odoacer had dispossessed not a Roman, but a Gothic ruler, would readily meet with acceptance.

Whether the above is the true explanation of the early development of the Dietrich saga, or whether that development was due partly or entirely to a tendency to adjust new hero-sagas to already existing types, it seems quite clear that Theoderic and Dietrich are identical, and further evidence in favour of this view will appear as we continue to follow out the growth of the saga. Their identity has, however, been

disputed by some scholars, and a short digression must here be made to notice the views of one of them, J. G. von Hahn.

Some of the earlier investigators of Germanic hero-saga, such as von der Hagen and Trautvetter, were led by the striking discrepancies between the actual lives of Theoderic and other historical characters and the fortunes of their counterparts in saga to favour a mythical or astronomical rather than a historical origin. Following in their footsteps, Hahn in his *Sagwissenschaftliche Studien* (Jena, 1876) went so far as to deny the existence of any historical basis whatever either for the Dietrich or for any other saga. In his view Dietrich was only in name identical with the great Theoderic, whose actual history was entirely forgotten, and to whom were attributed the deeds of an ancient mythical sun-hero. The saga itself he held to represent a nature myth, the flight of the summer sun before the dark powers of winter, and its eventual return in spring.

Starting with the assumption that all sagas represent nature myths originating in the pre-historic period before the Indo-European peoples left their common home, Hahn proceeded to compare the Greek, Roman, Germanic, Persian, and Indian sagas with a view to establishing their common origin. He arranged the individual

sagas in groups according to the features they had in common, and thus arrived at "formulae" containing the main features of the original myth. The Dietrich saga he grouped along with eleven others (*e.g.* the stories of Romulus and Remus, and of Theseus) under what he termed the "Aryan Formula of Exposure and Return," the main features of which were:—

I. Birth.—The hero illegitimate, his mother a princess, his father a god or a stranger.

II. Youth.—It is prophesied that the hero will supplant his mother's father, hence his exposure; he is suckled by wild beasts, brought up by childless peasants, becomes unmanageable, and goes out into the world to seek service among strangers.

III. Return. — He enters his mother's country as a victor, but is driven out again; on the death of his enemy he secures the throne and frees his mother; he founds a city, and finally dies an extraordinary death.

IV. Subsidiary Characters.—A youth is falsely accused of adultery and put to death; a wronged servant secures his revenge; the younger brother of the hero is murdered.

How far the Dietrich saga fits in with this formula will be more clearly seen when the medieval poems of the cycle have been dealt

with. For the present it is enough to remark that while we do actually find all the features enumerated under the fourth heading, and most of those under the third, those under the first two are almost entirely wanting. This difficulty Hahn ingeniously met by boldly assuming that the stories of the birth and youth of Witege, one of the subsidiary characters, belong by right to Dietrich. But as a matter of fact these stories agree with the formula only as regards Witege's birth, and not in one essential point as regards his youth. Moreover, we shall see that the features under the fourth heading were apparently introduced into the Dietrich saga by contamination with the Ermanaric saga, and into this by contamination with the Harlung saga, the mythical origin of which is not disputed. Strictly speaking, the only points in which the Dietrich saga agrees with the formula are that the hero returns in triumph to his own country, rules in security after his enemy's death, and at last meets with an extraordinary, or at any rate mysterious, death himself. The medieval poems tell also of an unsuccessful attempt to drive out the usurper, but this is probably a later addition to the story. In spite, therefore, of the ingenuity and learning displayed by Hahn in arriving at his results, we are forced to the conclusion that the Dietrich saga cannot fairly be claimed

as an example of the Aryan Formula of Exposure and Return. The most that can be admitted is the possibility that the formula, or rather other stories based on it, may have influenced to some extent the later development of the Dietrich saga.

Unshaken, then, in our belief in the historical origin of the Dietrich saga, we can now resume our study of its development from the simple form recognisable as the background of the *Hildebrandslied*.

That this form was at an early date widely known is attested by the Anglo-Saxon poem *Deor's Lament*, in which an allusion is made to Dietrich's thirty years of exile and subsequent return; but it is impossible to say with any certainty to which of the Germanic tribes we owe the development of the saga to this stage. Judging, however, from its further development, it seems to have been more especially among the Alamans on the northern side of the Alps that Dietrich became a favourite hero. Their special interest in the saga would be due partly to the fact that they were the neighbours—often the allies—of the Ostrogoths during Theoderic's reign and until the reconquest of Italy by Belisarius; and partly, perhaps, to the fact that Dietrich formed a contrast to an earlier Ostrogothic king, Ermanaric, the central figure of another saga, which, though also widely known,

owed its development more particularly to the Alamans.

The historical Ermanaric, compared by some Roman historians with Alexander the Great, was a very different character from the Ermanaric of saga. After building up a mighty Gothic empire which extended from the Black Sea to the Gulf of Bothnia, he was in his old age attacked by the Huns on their first appearance in Europe. Unable to induce his subjects to offer any effectual resistance to these fierce and terrible foes, he committed suicide in 375 A.D.

Tradition, however, assigned him a different end. As early as the sixth century the historian Jordanes,¹ himself a Goth, relates rather obscurely that Ermanaric, otherwise the noblest of the Amelungs, avenged the treason of one of his vassals by having his wife Sunilda torn asunder by wild horses. She was in her turn avenged by her brothers, who inflicted on the king a wound that contributed to his death.

Gradually the Ermanaric of saga became the type of cruelty and tyranny, and with him was associated an evil counsellor, Bikka, who, to avenge the death of relatives of his own, incited his master to further atrocities, among them the execution of his only son. According to some of the Norse

¹ *Jordanis Getica* (chap. xxiv.), edited by Mommsen in vol. v., part i., of the *Monumenta Germanicæ Historica*.

sagas, Bikka persuades Ermanaric to ask in marriage Swanhild, the daughter of Sigurd and Gudrun. The king's only son, Randver, is sent to bring home the bride, but on their arrival Bikka accuses them of illicit love, and Ermanaric in his rage has Randver hanged and Swanhild trampled to death by wild horses. Gudrun's sons set out to avenge their sister, but their attempt only partially succeeds, for, after having cut off Ermanaric's hands and feet, they are overcome and slain by his followers.

This story seems to have been influenced by the Harlung saga, which was eventually incorporated in the Ermanaric saga. In the original myth two twins, the Harlungs, were commissioned by the sky-god, Irmintius, to bring home his bride, the sun-maiden. But they themselves were fired with love at sight of the beautiful maid; by means of their treasures they won her favour, and for this crime they were punished with death by the angry god. From this dawn-myth developed the hero-saga of the Harlungs, nephews of Ermanaric, whose evil counsellor accuses them of plotting to win the queen's love. Ermanaric, incensed at their presumption and covetous of their treasure, gets the two youths into his power, and has them hanged.

For a time the two Gothic sagas of Theoderic, brave, wise, generous, and great even in exile,

and of Ermanaric, powerful, grasping, cruel, the murderer of his own kith and kin, existed side by side. But these two Gothic kings, both of the Amelung race, very naturally came to be thought of as kinsmen, and by the tenth century the tradition had been formed that it was the unscrupulous Ermanaric who had driven his nephew Dietrich into exile and seized his possessions. Odoacer disappeared from the story, and with this change the saga reached the stage which forms the basis of the medieval poems of the Dietrich cycle: Dietrich, whose capital was Bern (= Verona, the first important Italian city reached in crossing from the northern to the southern side of the Alps, and therefore the best known to the Alamans), is expelled from his rightful possessions by his uncle Ermenrich (the High German form of Ermanaric), and goes into exile at Attila's court. At the end of thirty (some sources say thirty-two) years he returns at the head of a powerful army to reconquer his own. Ermenrich is defeated at the battle of Ravenna, and after his death Dietrich rules once more in security over his own lands.

Though we have no direct proof that at this stage of the development of the saga Ermenrich met not only with defeat, but also with death, at Dietrich's hands, this issue to the conflict was demanded by poetic justice, and was certainly

current at a somewhat later period. According to a Low German poem printed in the sixteenth century, but based on a much older ballad, and generally known as *Ermenrichs Tod*, Ermenrich escaped after his defeat, and for long successfully eluded his pursuers. At last, however, Dietrich discovered the castle in which he had taken refuge, and, choosing only eleven followers, set off to complete his revenge. Having a garrison of 350 men in his castle, and seeing his nephew apparently in his power, Ermenrich ordered the gates to be thrown open, whereupon Dietrich rushed in with his companions, cut down all who barred his way, and with one terrible blow slew his treacherous enemy.

Unfortunately none of the other poems of the Dietrich cycle agree with this version. This is due to the fact that later on a conception arose (*cf.* p. 30) that Dietrich eventually returned to his own country unopposed. This would, of course, have been impossible until after Ermenrich's death, which was therefore accounted for in various ways. In the so-called *Anhang zum Heldenbuch* Ekehart kills him to avenge the murder of the Harlungs, while according to the *Thidrekssaga* he dies of an incurable disease. In most of the poems, however, his death is passed over in silence.

The further development of the Dietrich saga was determined chiefly by the constant endeavour

to add to Dietrich's fame by ascribing to him all manner of valiant deeds. Additions of this kind were, indeed, almost demanded to account for the traditional thirty years of inactivity at Attila's court; for it was incredible that so famous a hero as Dietrich should have passively endured so long an exile, or that he should have failed to take part in Attila's wars and to make some return by his valour for the hospitality he enjoyed. His connection with Attila thus came to be of the greatest importance for the further development of the saga, with the result that the original basis of expulsion, exile, and return, though not forgotten, fell into the background, while the main interest centred in interpolated episodes. According to the medieval saga he makes an unsuccessful attempt, with the help of troops lent by Attila, to reconquer his own, in the course of which campaign Attila's two sons meet their death; he rids the neighbourhood of Attila's court of a man-eating ogre; he proves his valour in Attila's wars with Slavonic tribes; he marries Herrat, the niece of Attila's consort Helche; he is the leader of the twelve knights who journey to Worms, under Attila's patronage, to measure themselves with Kriemhild's twelve champions; and he it is who finally conquers the Burgundian heroes, Gunther and Hagen, when all Attila's vassals have been slain.

Of these interpolations Dietrich's exploits against the Slavs, as related in the *Thidrekssaga* and in the fragmentary High German poem of *Dietrich und Wenezlan*, and his victory over Kriemhild's till then invincible champion, Siegfried (*cf.* p. 31), are but loosely connected with the saga; his marriage with Herrat, too, is of little interest, except in so far as it emphasises the closeness, according to medieval tradition, of the ties between Dietrich and Attila; while the story of the slaying of the ogre and rescue of a maiden about to be devoured, as told in *Etzel's Hofhaltung*, is a comparatively late addition to the cycle of Dietrich poems, composed in imitation of the mythical stories of Dietrich's youthful adventures, and mentioned here only because the author chose to assign it to the period of exile. The remaining additions to the saga, however, require more detailed notice.

Dietrich's unsuccessful campaign appears to have been originally conceived as taking place in the twentieth year of his exile, and as ending in a defeat—with which was connected, perhaps at a later stage, an old tradition of the death of Attila's two sons. But in course of time the idea that the popular hero ever suffered defeat at the hands of his rapacious uncle became intolerable, and he is actually represented in the medieval poems as going voluntarily into exile after winning

all his battles. The most remarkable development of this conception is found in *Dietrichs Flucht*, a brief summary of which will serve, if we disregard the multiplication of his victories and subsequent returns into exile, to give a rough idea of the form of the saga taken for granted by the other poems of the cycle.

Heinrich der Vogler, the author of *Dietrichs Flucht*, opens with a long and fanciful genealogy in the most approved medieval style. He connects his hero's ancestors with the heroes of other well-known sagas, recounts many of their adventures and exploits, and at last comes to Dietrich's father Dietmar, and his uncles Ermenrich and Diether, the father of the Harlung princes. He then tells how Sibeche (the German representative of the Norse Bikka) incites Ermenrich to the murder of the two Harlung princes and to an infamous plot against Dietrich's life. Fortunately Dietrich is warned and saved from falling into the trap set for him, whereupon Ermenrich collects a great army and marches on Bern. Though possessing a vastly inferior force, Dietrich succeeds in taking Ermenrich by surprise, and completely defeats him, taking prisoner his son Friedrich.

Desiring to reward his followers for their valour, Dietrich sends a picked body of them to escort to Bern a large treasure, but they are ambushed on their return journey by a large

force of Ermenrich's men and carried off as prisoners. Ermenrich now threatens to hang them all in revenge for his defeat. The reminder that his son Friedrich is in Dietrich's power fails to move him, and Dietrich is compelled to purchase their lives by surrendering his kingdom and going into exile.

After many years of exile at Attila's court news comes that Dietrich's party have recovered possession of Bern. He returns, defeats another army sent against him by Ermenrich, and, after appointing trusty vassals as governors of the various provinces of his kingdom, leads back to Attila a force of Huns lent for the campaign. During his absence Witege yields to bribery, goes over to Ermenrich (as Tufa did to Odoacer), and surrenders to him the important fortress of Ravenna. With a new army of Huns, Dietrich returns once more, and again defeats Ermenrich, who takes refuge in Bologna. But Dietrich has lost so many of his best warriors that a siege is impossible, and, realising that he can enjoy no safety in Bern while his uncle lives, he once more returns to Attila.

At this point Heinrich der Vogler, apparently tiring of his subject, concludes his tedious narrative; but in a second poem, the *Rabenschlacht* (Battle of Ravenna), he provides a sort of sequel. This consists in another victorious campaign, in

the course of which, however, Dietrich's brother and Attila's two sons are slain. But it is in this tragedy that the interest of the *Rabenschlacht* centres, and the author, after telling of Dietrich's third return to Attila with his sad news, is content to omit all mention of the final recovery of his kingdom and of Ermenrich's death.

In addition to the assumption that Dietrich took part in Attila's wars with the Slavs, and to the invention of one or more unsuccessful attempts to regain his throne, a welcome opportunity of adding to Dietrich's fame and swelling the list of exploits performed during the time of exile offered itself in connection with the Nibelungen tragedy. Tradition having fixed the scene of this great catastrophe, in which the Burgundians perish to a man fighting against overwhelming odds, in Attila's capital, the inference that Dietrich played a leading part in the conflict must have been irresistible to the medieval mind. It was undoubtedly drawn and readily accepted, but, curiously enough, it is only the *Nibelungenlied*, and a portion of the *Thidrekssaga* based on the *Nibelungenlied*, that have preserved the resulting story of his tardy but decisive intervention. It is quite evident, however, from the characterisation of Dietrich and his followers, especially Hildebrand and Wolfhart, that the Dietrich episode in the *Nibelungenlied* represents a lost

poem of the Dietrich cycle. Dietrich is pictured as an honoured guest at Etzel's (Attila's) court. Suspecting that Kriemhild is planning treachery, he rides out to meet the Burgundians on their approach and warns them to be on their guard. But the catastrophe is inevitable, and when, at last, the fighting begins at the banquet, he determines to hold aloof. Out of friendship for Etzel he escorts him and Kriemhild in safety from the banqueting hall, but firmly refuses to yield to Kriemhild's entreaties to take her side in the conflict. His followers, however, become involved through the hot-headedness of Wolfhart, and all are slain except old Hildebrand, who returns wounded to tell his master the news. Now Dietrich has no choice but to avenge his Amelungs. Donning his armour, he goes forth to fight the two surviving Burgundian heroes, whom he delivers bound to Kriemhild. In spite of his request that their lives shall be spared, Kriemhild has Gunther slain in the hope of learning from Hagen the hiding-place of the Nibelung treasure. But when Hagen sees Gunther's head before him, he exclaims that the secret is now known to God and himself alone, and that she shall never know it. In her fury Kriemhild seizes his sword—once Siegfried's—and in the presence of Etzel, Dietrich, and Hildebrand, strikes off his head. Hildebrand

(perhaps in the original version, as in the *Thidrekssaga*, Dietrich), enraged to see a brave warrior die so shameful a death, springs forward and kills her too. Then, according to the *Klage*, leaving Attila's court full of mourning for the death of so many valiant men, Dietrich and Hildebrand, themselves weighed down with sorrow, set out for Bern.

This connection of Dietrich with the Nibelungen catastrophe is not only finely motivated and interesting in itself, but is also important as having brought about a change in the general outline of the Dietrich saga. For, having lost all his followers except Hildebrand, Dietrich could no longer be supposed to have eventually recovered his own by force of arms. Hence it is that in all the extant medieval poems (except *Ermenrichs Tod*) his return, if alluded to, is represented as taking place without opposition and after Ermenrich's death.

Slow to anger, but terrible and invincible in the rage of battle, loyal and generous to vassals and friends, steadfast in misfortune, Dietrich possessed just the qualities to make him a favourite with the soldiery and peasantry who formed the audiences of the wandering minstrels; and although the Dietrich saga was never wrought into a complete epic like the *Nibelungenlied*, there is no doubt that, like Siegfried

in the Rhine country, Dietrich was by far the most popular hero of saga in south-eastern, and perhaps also in north-western, Germany. From the time of his introduction into the *Nibelungenlied* he and Siegfried would naturally be thought of as contemporaries during their youth, and the motive of a contest between the two invincible heroes would readily suggest itself to singers in search of something new with which to secure the interest of their hearers. As a matter of fact we have three distinct treatments of this theme. In the *Thidrekssaga*, Siegfried, as the banner-bearer of King Isung of Bertangaland, fights with and is overcome, though only through trickery, by Dietrich; in *Biterolf* a great battle between the Rhenish heroes, among them Siegfried, and the Austro-Bavarian heroes, among them Dietrich, ends in the defeat of the former; in the *Rosengarten zu Worms* (*Der grosse Rosengarten*) Kriemhild's twelve champions, including Siegfried, are one by one worsted in single combat by twelve of Etzel's knights under the leadership of Dietrich. The last two stories may safely be assigned to Austro-Bavarian authors jealous for the fame of their national hero, while in the first an Austro-Bavarian original seems to have been tampered with in Siegfried's favour by a northern redactor.

In addition, however, to what may be termed

its own organic development, a great and popular saga has the power of attracting to itself other less developed sagas and shorter epic songs, the contents of which eventually form episodes in the complete saga. We have already seen how the primitive story of mortal conflict between father and son was, in Germany, attached to the Dietrich saga and became an episode in the return from exile. Similar episodes, originally foreign to the saga, occur in the later poems of the cycle in the narratives of Alphart's death and of the tragic fate that befell Etzel's sons and Dietrich's brother.

For the latter story there is historical foundation in so far as one of Attila's sons did actually fall in a battle with the Goths, and no doubt the event once formed the subject of epic songs. In course of time, however, it was connected with Dietrich's unsuccessful attempt to reconquer his kingdom with the help of Attila's Huns, and it appears both in the *Rabenschlacht* and in the *Thidrekssaga* as an episode of the battle of Ravenna. The death of Dietrich's brother did not form part of the original story, but was added later, perhaps to relieve Dietrich of any suspicion of having failed to take due care of the young princes, and to smooth the way to Etzel's forgiveness.

Etzel, we are told in the *Rabenschlacht*, had

equipped an army of Huns to assist Dietrich in his expedition, and his two sons, Ort and Scharf, begged for permission to take part in the campaign. Their mother Helche was most unwilling to let them go, for in a dream she had seen them carried off and slain by a dragon; but their importunity, together with Dietrich's pledges for their safety and the example he set by taking with him his youthful brother Diether, finally won her consent.

Italy reached, it was decided to leave the three young princes at Bern (Verona) under the care of the aged Elsan; but scarcely had Dietrich marched on towards Ravenna, where Ermenrich was encamped, than they contrived to escape. Having persuaded their guardian by dint of coaxing and entreaties to ride out with them into the open country, they set off at a gallop before his stiff limbs were in the saddle, and when he reached the city gate they were nowhere to be seen. His shouts brought no reply, and a thick mist settling over the fields hid the runaways from pursuit.

In high spirits over their successful dash for liberty, the headstrong youths rode on all day till night overtook them on a lonely heath only a few miles, though they did not know it, from Ravenna. The next morning, when the mists had dispersed, they were admiring

the beauty of the scene, when they spied riding towards them a knight in full armour. It was Witege, as Diether quickly saw, and they at once determined to taunt him with his desertion from Dietrich and challenge him to fight. Unwilling to stain his hands with the blood of mere striplings, Witege patiently bore their reproaches and did all in his power to dissuade them from their purpose, but was at last attacked by Scharf and forced to kill him in self-defence. Ort now rushed in to avenge his brother, but though he fought valiantly he was no match for Witege. In vain did the latter, during a pause for rest, exhort his opponent to give up the unequal contest; before long Ort had shared his brother's fate. There was now only Diether left. Determined either to avenge his comrades or to die himself, he fought with Witege throughout the day, but at last he, too, was overcome, and the three youths all lay dead among the heather.

Wounded and exhausted, Witege lay down to rest not far from the scene of the conflict, but before long Dietrich, who had meanwhile gained a decisive victory, came upon the scene. At first he was overwhelmed by grief, and flung himself down beside the dead bodies, but then came the thought of vengeance. The wounds, he saw, must have been made by Witege's sword Mimung,

and just as he noticed this a cry arose from his followers, for not far away was Witege himself mounting his horse to escape. A hot pursuit followed, in which Dietrich soon outdistanced his companions, but even then no taunts or insults could induce the fugitive to turn and face his former lord. On they raced till they reached the seashore, and Dietrich was at last on the point of securing his vengeance, when Witege disappeared before his very eyes, spirited away by the mermaid Wachilde, his ancestress.

A somewhat similar story to this, possibly indeed an imitation of it, is that of Alphart's death, frequently alluded to in the poems of the cycle, but told in detail only in *Alpharts Tod*. The poem opens with a declaration of war carried by Heime from Ermenrich to Dietrich. As soon as the messenger had ridden off again, a council of war was held, and Alphart, the most promising of the younger warriors, and beloved alike by young and old, offered to go out and watch for the enemy's approach while Dietrich collected his forces. In vain did his brother Wolfhart and his uncle Hildebrand endeavour to dissuade him; he claimed the right to be given an opportunity of proving his valour, and at last won Dietrich's permission to undertake the dangerous duty.

Full of confidence in his strength and prowess, he donned his armour, girt on his sword, and rode

off to a hill commanding the road by which Ermenrich must advance. Before long he saw approaching one of Ermenrich's knights with a company of eighty men, and eagerly challenged him to single combat. As they came together at full gallop, Alphart's lance passed through his opponent's body, and of the eighty men at arms who attempted to avenge their leader eight only escaped and returned wounded to the main army.

For a time no other of Ermenrich's knights would venture to face the young and unknown warrior, but at last Witege volunteered to go. On the way his courage sank, but to have turned back would have brought him lifelong disgrace, and he soon found himself on the corpse-strewn hill. A short parley ensued, in which Alphart reproached Witege for his disloyalty to Dietrich, and then the combat began.

Witege quickly discovered that his opponent's prowess had been by no means exaggerated by the fugitives. He was unhorsed at the first shock, and, after a sharp fight on foot, found himself stretched on the ground beneath his shield, and entirely at Alphart's mercy. The latter, however, chivalrously refrained from taking advantage of his foe; but, as he paused, Witege's friend Heime, who had secretly followed and watched the fight, rushed out from behind a tree, and made the impudent sugges-

tion that the combat should be broken off, Alphart returning to Bern, and he and Witege telling Ermenrich they had failed to find their enemy. "God forbid!" cried Alphart indignantly; "unless Witege become my prisoner, the fight must go on."

Heime thereupon stood aside, but Witege had no mind to face Alphart again alone, and begged his friend not to forsake him. At first Heime refused to sacrifice his honour by helping Witege against his youthful opponent; but finally the argument that, when his friend was slain, he would surely meet the same fate, proved effective, and after Alphart had rejected a final offer of peace, the unequal contest began.

Alphart defended himself manfully for a time against his enemies, but at last, feeling his arm grow weary, he cried: "If you murder me here, Witege and Heime, two to one, you will sin against God, and be disgraced for ever." "He speaks truly," said Heime to his friend; "I will withstand him alone." But Witege would not be persuaded, and the fight continued as before. Alphart now slung his shield on his back, and felled his foes by turns with mighty blows, but even his great strength failed at last. Once more he reminded them of their unknightly conduct, and offered even yet to forget it if they would but meet him singly; but Witege again refused,

and soon Alphart fell to the ground exhausted and defenceless. Then Witege thrust his sword through the slit in his armour. "Base cowards, men without honour!" cried the youthful warrior, and expired.

The three poems already summarised, *Dietrichs Flucht*, the *Rabenschlacht*, and *Alpharts Tod*, are based on the semi-historical tradition of Dietrich's expulsion, exile, and return; but all the remaining poems of the cycle are of a totally different character, and deal with his earlier adventures among giants, dwarfs, dragons, and other representatives of a debased mythology. It is not necessary to assume that the original hero of these stories was a mythical Dietrich. We have ample testimony of the historical Dietrich's popularity among the peasantry of nearly all parts of Germany, and know that among them stories of Dietrich were current for several centuries. It was among the peasantry, of course, that the ancient myths longest survived, and it is quite probable that some of the stories in question were actually myths, in which Dietrich had replaced the original hero. But however that may be, it seems clear that we owe the mythical Dietrich poems to wandering minstrels who turned to account the rustic myths and Dietrich stories, combined them as it suited their purposes, and added to them similar episodes of their own invention.

The mythical character of the stories on which some, at any rate, of the medieval poems are based is most evident in the various versions of Dietrich's victory over the giants Ecke and Fasolt. There can be no doubt that Ecke was a storm spirit, and the original myth a storm myth, representing the victory of natural forces friendly to mankind over the destructive fury of the elements. In Ecke himself, whose name is explained as meaning "The Terrifier," we clearly recognise a personification of the storm when we read how his passage through the forest brought the branches crashing from the trees, and how birds and beasts fled in terror at his approach. His brother Fasolt, too, reappears in a similar character in an old weather charm in which he is called upon to drive away the tempest; the three princesses in the castle of Jochgrimm, who send out Ecke on his quest of Dietrich, are no doubt identical with the three ancient witches of the modern Tyrolese fairy tale, who brew bad weather on the summit of Jochgrimm mountain; and the maiden hunted through the forest by Fasolt and his hounds was once a wood-nymph fleeing from the storm.

The original conqueror of these storm giants must evidently have been not Dietrich, but some mythical hero or god, very possibly, as Uhland first suggested, Donar (the German name for

Thor), the Thunderer, whose combats with the giants are well known from Scandinavian mythology. In that case we may suppose that, after the introduction of Christianity into the district where the myth was current, the heathen god's place in the story was taken by Dietrich of Bern, whose popularity and traditional invincibility made him the best possible substitute.

Originating from a purely local Tyrolese myth, the story of the slaying of Ecke by Dietrich presumably struck the fancy of some wandering gleeman who worked it up into poetic form and sang or recited it to many fresh audiences as he continued his travels. At any rate, however it came about, the story was well known by the middle of the thirteenth century, not only in southern but also in northern Germany, where it found a new home, and whence, after being localised afresh in Westphalia, it was carried to Norway, to be made use of by the compiler of the *Thidrekssaga*. In the course of its wanderings it naturally underwent many alterations and received many additions, with the result that the High German versions still extant not only differ widely from the account given in the *Thidrekssaga*, but also vary considerably among themselves. The following brief account is broadly representative of the High German versions.

In the castle of Jochgrimm there dwelt three

princesses, whose wooers were the giant brothers Ecke, Fasolt, and Ebenrot. Dietrich's fame having spread to Jochgrimm, one of the princesses, Seburg, sends out the youthful Ecke to bring Dietrich to their castle, dead or alive. She presents her chosen knight with a magnificent suit of armour and buckles it on with her own hands; a fine charger, too, she offers him, but as no horse could carry him in battle he sets off on foot. With huge strides he runs and leaps through field and forest, the animals fleeing in terror and the birds forgetting to sing.

On arriving at Bern, where at sight of his flashing armour the inhabitants seek safety in their houses, he learns from Hildebrand that Dietrich has ridden away to the Tyrol in search of adventure. He at once sets off in pursuit, and on the way comes across a knight lying grievously wounded by the roadside, the one survivor of four with whom Dietrich had recently fought. Ecke binds up his wounds, resumes his way, undaunted by the wounded man's earnest warnings, and not long after nightfall overtakes Dietrich in a gloomy forest lighted up only by the flashes from their armour.

Hearing the clank of Ecke's weapons, Dietrich turned to see who was following him and to inquire his errand. The young giant's impetuous challenge, however, he declined to accept, and

when Ecke tried to rouse him by recounting the virtues of the sword and armour he would win if victorious, Dietrich quietly declared that it would be madness on his part to fight against such weapons. But Ecke would not be denied; he strode along by Dietrich's side, endeavouring by taunts and insults to rouse his anger, and at length exclaimed that he was determined to fight even though God Himself should aid Dietrich. "It is clear that you are tired of life," replied the latter; "since you grant me God's help, your death is sure." The combat began, and lasted far into the next day; but at last Dietrich's battle-fury came upon him, and, closing with his opponent, he threw him to the ground. Though now in his enemy's power, Ecke obstinately refused all offers of mercy and even of comradeship, and Dietrich was compelled to give him the *coup de grâce*.

Dietrich now stripped him of his armour and cut off his head to take to the princess who had sent him on his fatal errand. Proceeding on his way, he came upon a water-fairy sleeping by a spring, and after she had dressed his wounds and warned him of the perils he would encounter, he set off for the land of the giants. One day, as he was riding through the forest, he came upon a maiden fleeing for her life from Ecke's brother Fasolt and his hounds.

Dietrich at once took her under his protection, and, after overcoming her pursuer, made him swear allegiance and forced him to lead the way to Jochgrimm. More than once Fasolt tried to avenge his brother and regain his liberty by treachery; and as they arrived before the castle he all but succeeded, for there stood before the entrance two wonderful statues, fully armed, that struck at all who passed between. Not suspecting the trap, Dietrich rode straight on, and barely escaped the terrible blows meant to destroy him. Then, having slain Fasolt for this final act of treachery, he entered the castle, and made his way to the great hall where the three princesses were holding their brilliant court. "You wished to see Dietrich of Bern," he cried. "Here he is, and here the greeting of your messenger." And with that he flung Ecke's head at their feet, left the hall without further words, and rode home to Bern.

Dietrich was, however, not always so successful in his combats with the giants, for there existed an old and widespread tradition that he once fell into their power and was held captive until rescued by his followers. The oldest evidence of the existence of this tradition occurs as early as the ninth century in the second *Waldere Fragment*—a remnant of an Anglo-Saxon version of the South German saga of Walter of Aquitaine

—where we are told that Widia (Witege) once set Dietrich free and enabled him to escape from the land of the giants. The story here referred to, or others like it, evidently lived on among the peasantry; for the conception on which it is based reappears in various forms in the Middle High German poems of *Sigenôt*, *Virginal*, and perhaps *Laurin*, all of which, like the *Eckenlied*, have developed from stories of Tyrolese origin. In *Sigenôt* and *Virginal* Dietrich is for a time the captive of the giants, in *Laurin* of the dwarfs. In *Sigenôt* he is rescued by Hildebrand, in *Virginal* by a number of his followers, among them Hildebrand and Witege (though an allusion in *Alpharts Tod* seems to show that in the original of the *Virginal* story it was Witege alone who rescued both Dietrich and Heime), while in *Laurin* it is to the help of a maiden who had been carried off by the dwarf that Dietrich and his men owe their deliverance. This last motive appears also in *Virginal*, where the sister of Duke Nitger, to whom the giants are subject, frustrates their attempts on their prisoner's life.

In the older version of *Sigenôt* we read how Dietrich was one day riding alone through a forest near Bern when he came suddenly upon the giant Sigenot sound asleep. Being in search of adventures, he wakened the giant none too gently (with a kick, according to the later ver-

sions), whereupon Sigenot rose up, and recognising the slayer of his kinsman Grim, announced his intention of taking vengeance. Without more ado he felled Dietrich with his cudgel, carried him off through the forest, and cast him into a deep pit infested by snakes.

Meanwhile Hildebrand had set out in search of his master, and, as luck would have it, met Sigenot returning towards Bern. On learning his name and errand the giant attacked him furiously; but the old warrior defended himself valiantly until his sword was struck from his hand, whereupon Sigenot caught him up by the beard and carried him off ignominiously to share his master's fate. But at the mouth of the pit Hildebrand spied Dietrich's sword, and, snatching it up, quickly despatched his captor. Then, stripping off his clothes, he made a rope and lowered it into the pit. It broke, however, under Dietrich's weight, and it was only the friendly help of the dwarf Eggerich, who showed him where to find a ladder, that at length enabled him to rescue the king from his undesirable quarters.

The long and rambling poem known as *Virginal*, other versions of which exist under the titles *Dietrichs erste Ausfahrt* and *Dietrich und seine Gesellen*, appears to have for its ultimate basis a story including both Dietrich's captivity among the giants, as in *Sigenôt*, and his rescue of a

maiden from their clutches, as in the Fasolt episode of the *Eckenlied* and in *Etzels Hofhaltung* (cf. p. 25). Possibly the composer of *Virginal* did not know the story in its original simple form; but, in whatever form he did know it, he undoubtedly added to and altered it very extensively in order to produce for court circles a sort of imitation of the Arthurian romances. The result is a, for the most part tedious, series of adventures and festivities loosely strung together and containing numerous self-contradictions, which may, however, be due to alterations made by later redactors.

As *Virginal* consists of upwards of 14,000 lines, space does not permit of a full account of its contents being given, and the following brief indication of the chief episodes must suffice. News comes to Bern that the maiden Queen Virginal of Jeraspunt is hard put to it to defend her realm against the Saracen Orkise, and has been forced to pay annual tribute in the shape of a maiden from her court. Dietrich and Hildebrand set out to free her from her oppressor. In the forest they separate, and Hildebrand comes upon one of Virginal's maidens who has just been brought to the spot agreed upon with the Saracen and left for him to carry off. Soon he appears, fights with Hildebrand, and is slain. Mean-

while Dietrich has become embroiled with a number of Orkise's followers, but Hildebrand comes to his help and the infidels are put to flight. The maiden then hastens back to Virginal's court with the good news, and the queen sends by the dwarf Bibung a cordial invitation to her deliverers. But they are destined to meet with many adventures before reaching Jeraspunt. They are attacked by dragons, from the jaws of one of which they rescue a knight named Rentwin. After exterminating the whole brood, they accompany Rentwin to his father's castle, where they rest and make merry till their wounds are healed. They then set out for Jeraspunt, accompanied by their late hosts, and Dietrich in his eagerness rides on ahead of his companions. But he loses his way and arrives near the castle of Duke Nitger. Meeting one of the duke's giants, he asks his way to Virginal's court, but as he turns to retrace his steps, the giant fells him with his steel club and carries him off as a prisoner to the castle. Duke Nitger, who is actually more afraid of his giants than they are of him, has to take charge of Dietrich pending his ransom. Meanwhile, however, the giants make attempts on Dietrich's life, and it is only thanks to the kindness of Nitger's sister that their plans are foiled. At last Hildebrand,

with a large army from Bern and other realms whose rulers were friendly to Dietrich, arrives before the castle. The giants, twelve in number, are slain by twelve of the besiegers' champions (one of whom was Dietrich, set free for the purpose), and Nitger having been pardoned for his sister's sake, all set out for Jeraspunt. On the way they engage in further combats with dragons and giants, but finally arrive safe and sound at Virginal's castle, where they are welcomed enthusiastically and entertained by a long round of festivities. According to *Dietrichs erste Ausfahrt* and *Dietrich und seine Gesellen*, Dietrich takes home Virginal to Bern as his bride.

In the *Eckenlied*, *Sigenôt*, and *Virginal*, giants are Dietrich's principal opponents, but in *Laurin* (or *Der kleine Rosengarten*) and in *Goldemar* we see that tradition ascribed to him equally marvellous adventures in dwarf-land. Possibly both these poems are based on one and the same ancient myth of the capture of a maiden by dwarfs, or elves, and her eventual release by a hero who makes her his wife. If such was the theme of the original story, it appears to have been more closely adhered to in *Goldemar* than in *Laurin*; but as we possess only fragments of a *Goldemar* poem, by a certain Albrecht von Kemenaten, and a couple of

allusions in later medieval literature, we know nothing of the details of the story. We can infer, however, that Dietrich, having fought with and overcome Goldemar, married the maiden he had rescued.

In *Laurin* the original story is complicated by the introduction of the rose-garden motive. Like Kriemhild in the *Rosengarten zu Worms* (cf. p. 31) the dwarf-king possesses a wonderful rose-garden in which he takes especial pride, and all who have as yet entered the garden have been conquered by the dwarf and punished by the loss of a hand and a foot. Thither, in consequence of Hildebrand's taunts, Dietrich rides in company with Witege; but while the former is too much impressed by the beauty and fragrance of the flowers to despoil the garden, the latter ruthlessly rides in on horseback and hacks at and tramples down the bloom-covered bushes. Laurin appears, only three spans high, but magnificently mounted and armed, and at the first charge flings Witege from his saddle. Thereupon Dietrich, to save his vassal from paying the usual penalty, takes upon himself all responsibility for the damage done, and challenges the dwarf to fight.

Meanwhile old Hildebrand, knowing the difficulties and dangers in store for his master, had followed with a number of Dietrich's men,

and arrived upon the scene just as Dietrich and Laurin were levelling their lances for the charge. On his advice, Dietrich, instead of thrusting in knightly fashion, brought his weapon heavily down on his opponent's head; but before he could repeat the blow the dwarf put on his *tarn-kappe* (a cloak which rendered the wearer invisible, like that won by Siegfried from the dwarf Alberich in the Nibelungen story) and Dietrich now received wound after wound from his unseen foe. But again Hildebrand came to his help. After persuading Laurin to decide the contest by a wrestling match, he secretly advised Dietrich to wrench off the girdle that gave his adversary the strength of twelve men, and the dwarf soon found himself at Dietrich's mercy. He had just given up all for lost when he noticed among the bystanders Dietleib of Styria, whose sister Künhild he had carried off. Up to that moment none knew by whom, or whither, she had been spirited away, and when Dietleib heard himself appealed to by the dwarf as his brother-in-law he was so overjoyed at discovering a trace of his sister, and so anxious to find and release her, that he intervened on Laurin's behalf, and Dietrich was at last persuaded to spare his life.

Laurin now invited them all to accompany him into the mountain and inspect his treasures. It

was not without fear of treachery that they followed him, but once inside they forgot all danger in wondering at the wealth that surrounded them, in drinking the delicious mead and wine set before them, in watching the dances and tournaments, and in listening to the music and songs of their host's subjects. One by one Dietrich and his men were overcome by the strong wine, and when all were helpless Laurin had them disarmed, bound, and cast into a deep dungeon. There they would probably have lain till they perished of hunger, had not Künhild set free her brother, who was imprisoned apart from the rest, and brought him all the weapons. He at once hurried to his companions' dungeon and set them free, but it was only after a hard fight, in which they were helped by Künhild's counter-charms against the magic of the dwarfs, that they overcame Laurin and his followers.

The remainder of the poem, telling of the return to Bern with the dwarf-king as their prisoner, of Künhild's departure for Styria with her brother, of Laurin's treatment during his captivity, his eventual conversion to Christianity, his reconciliation with Dietrich and his return to his own kingdom, is evidently of comparatively late origin; and of still later is the continuation in which we read how Walberan collected an immense army of dwarfs and marched to Bern to

set Laurin free, but on his arrival found Dietrich and Laurin reconciled.

With *Laurin* we conclude our survey of the poems of the Dietrich cycle, and there remains only the prose *Thidrekssaga*, to which occasional reference has been made, but which has so far received no further notice. The *Thidrekssaga* was originally composed in Norway about the middle of the thirteenth century by an Icelandic saga-writer, who drew his material from songs and stories then current in North Germany. His work was recast and largely expanded by one or more redactors, and is, in its present form, a rich treasury of Germanic saga. In it a number of the Germanic sagas have been brought into connection with the Dietrich saga and each other; but in spite of this it has frequently preserved features of the original sagas that are wanting in the South German epics.

The *Thidrekssaga* opens with what professes to be an account of Dietrich's ancestry, beginning with the history of his grandfather Samson, the hero of a Frankish saga. Samson, we learn, left two sons, Ermenrich and Dietmar (to retain the Middle High German forms of the names for the sake of clearness and uniformity), the latter of whom was Dietrich's father. Then follows an account of Dietrich's youth, in which we are told of Hildebrand's arrival at Dietmar's court during

Dietrich's seventh year, of the close friendship that grew up between Hildebrand and Dietrich; further how Dietrich forced the dwarf Alberich to give him his sword Nagelring, how he slew the giant couple Grim and Hilde, and how he fought a duel with Heime, spared his life, and enrolled him among his followers.

At this point a digression introduces the Wilkina saga, stories of the Slavonic king Wilkinus and of the warfare of Osantrix, king of Wilkina-land, with Attila. Then follows the Wieland (Wayland Smith) saga, Wieland being made the son of Wade (the Wate of the *Gudrun* epic, and the Wade of Middle English literature), and the grandson of Wilkinus. With the story of the birth and youth of Witege, Wieland's illegitimate son, the purpose of this lengthy digression at last appears, and the Dietrich saga is resumed.

Witege, like Heime, comes to Bern to try his prowess against Dietrich. In the duel he is at first outmatched, but on receiving from Hildebrand his own sword Mimung, which the latter had secretly exchanged for another, he presses Dietrich hard. He spares his life, however, on Hildebrand's intervention, and becomes, like Heime, one of Dietrich's companions. To retrieve his disgrace Dietrich rides out alone in search of adventures, slays Ecke, vanquishes Fasolt, whom he takes into his service, and kills an elephant and

a dragon, rescuing from the latter Hildebrand's kinsman Sintram, with whom he returns to Bern.

Dietrich's fame continues to attract one hero after another to Bern, the arrival of Dietleib providing the opportunity of working in the story of Biterolf and Dietleib, and the duel of the latter with Walter of Aquitaine. In course of time King Dietmar dies and is succeeded by Dietrich, who becomes the ally of Attila in a new war with Osantrix. Shortly after returning home he engages in another expedition to assist his uncle Ermenrich in punishing Rimstein, by whom the tribute due had been refused.

Here a new digression is made to bring in the ancestry, birth, and youthful exploits of Siegfried, the hero of the Nibelungen saga, up to his instalment as standard-bearer to King Isung of Bertangaland. Hearing of Siegfried's prowess, Dietrich sets out with twelve chosen warriors to Bertangaland, where a series of duels takes place between his and Isung's champions. Last of all Dietrich meets Siegfried, who, however, stipulates that his opponent shall not use Witege's sword Mimung. For two days they fight without either wounding the other, but on the third day Dietrich, deceiving Siegfried by a quibble, uses Mimung and gains the advantage, whereupon Siegfried exchanges from Isung's into his service. On the way home they visit Worms, and the opportunity

is seized to work in the stories of Siegfried's marriage with Kriemhild, and Gunther's with Brunhild. These are followed by the sagas of Herborg and Hilde, Walter of Aquitaine and Hildegund, and Iron and Apollonius, after which the so often broken thread of the Dietrich saga is once more taken up.

Ermenrich having outraged the wife of Sibeche (who corresponds to the Norse Bikka), the latter sets himself to avenge his honour by bringing about the death first of Ermenrich's three sons, then of his two nephews, the young Harlung princes, by means of evil counsels and false accusations. Finally he persuades Ermenrich to demand tribute from Dietrich as a test of his loyalty. On his refusal an army marches on Bern, and Dietrich takes refuge with Attila. He again takes part in wars with Osantrix, whose death during the last campaign is overlooked, and against King Waldemar of Russia and his ally Dietrich of Greece. After twenty years of exile Attila lends him an army of Huns for his first attempt to recover his throne. Ermenrich's army is defeated, but Attila's two sons and Dietrich's younger brother are among the slain, whereupon Dietrich returns with the sad news to the land of the Huns.

Here the Dietrich saga is yet again interrupted, this time in favour of the Nibelungen saga.

Beginning with the quarrel between Brunhild and Kriemhild, the whole story of Siegfried's death and Kriemhild's vengeance is told in a form that agrees, in the main, with the version found in the *Nibelungenlied*. Dietrich's share in the final catastrophe differs only in minor points from the part he plays in the Middle High German epic. He refuses to lend himself to Kriemhild's plans, and holds aloof, at first, from the conflict; but on the death of his friend Rüdiger he joins in the fray, and himself takes prisoner Hagen, the last survivor of the Burgundians. When all is over he returns to Bern, accompanied only by his wife Herrat and the faithful Hildebrand, for all his men have been slain. On the way they hear that Ermenrich has died and that Sibeche has seized the throne, but that Hildebrand's son Alebrand is holding Bern for Dietrich. On arriving near Bern Hildebrand meets and fights with Alebrand, and, after forcing him to tell his name, spares his life. Joyfully welcomed in Bern, Dietrich marches against Sibich, who is defeated and slain, after which the remainder of the book consists partly of more expeditions against dragons and giants, partly of accounts of the deaths of Hildebrand, Attila, Heime, and lastly Dietrich himself.

In this summary of the *Thidrekssaga* we have had our second reference only to Dietrich's origin

and our first to his end. Of the medieval German poems only *Dietrichs Flucht* and the *Anhang zum Heldenbuch* (really a sort of preface to a collection of epic poems from various saga cycles) give accounts of his origin, and these two accounts are of distinctly different types, historical and mythical. In *Dietrichs Flucht*, as in the *Thidrekssaga*, we find a genealogy based on historical tradition. Both retain the name of Theoderic's father Theodemer (in the forms Dietmar and Thetmar); both are further true to history in giving Theodemer two brothers, and both true to an old form of the saga, though false to history, in recognising Ermanaric as one of those brothers. Beyond this, however, the two genealogies have nothing in common, except that both are free inventions. The author of the *Thidrekssaga* was content with the introduction of Samson as Dietrich's grandfather. But the author of the genealogy given in *Dietrichs Flucht* gave his fancy free play, and followed his hero's ancestry through his grandfather Amelung to the grandfather of the first husband of a princess whose second husband was Dietrich's great-great-grandfather. The name Amelung he introduced, no doubt, to account for the traditional designation of Dietrich's followers as Amelungs, but this term ought historically to be confined to Dietrich himself and the other members of the royal house founded by the legendary Amalus mentioned by Jordanes.

According to the mythical tradition, derived, presumably, from Dietrich's mythical rôle as conqueror of the giants and the dwarfs, his birth, like that of so many heroes of saga, was mysterious, and his real father was not Dietmar, but some supernatural being. Of the details of the story we know nothing, but its existence is hinted at in the *Thidrekssaga* and confirmed by the modified version found in the *Anhang zum Heldenbuch*, where an evil spirit named Machmet (= Mahomet), though not actually Dietrich's father, exercises on him a pre-natal influence.

Concerning Dietrich's end most of the poems of the cycle are silent; but from two of them, as well as from the *Thidrekssaga* and other sources, we know that tradition told of his mysterious disappearance. As early as the sixth century, that in which Theoderic's death took place, a story was current to the effect that after his death Theoderic's body was carried off by the devil and cast into the crater of a volcano. This story, invented by the Italian clergy to destroy the popularity of the great king whom they regarded as a heretic and the murderer of Boethius, spread beyond Italy and reappears in later centuries in various forms. A twelfth century chronicler, Otto von Freisingen, mentions a tradition that Dietrich died no natural death, but rode alive to hell on

horseback. Similar to this is the story in the *Thidrekssaga*, which tells how one day, as he was bathing, Dietrich saw a stag not far away and was immediately filled with a great desire to pursue it. Suddenly a coal-black steed appeared, but, when Dietrich had mounted, it carried him off with such speed that none could follow. It was, in fact, the devil himself, and Dietrich was never seen again. The same story forms the subject of a relief in Verona, and was also current in the fourteenth century in a slightly different form in Spain.

The idea, however, that Dietrich was carried off bodily to hell must have been very unpalatable to his medieval admirers, and it is probably to this fact that we owe the considerable differences between the remaining traditions and those just mentioned. According to *Etzels Hofhaltung* the devil in the shape of a black horse carried him off not to hell, but to the desert of Rumenei, there to fight with dragons till the Day of Judgment; the Swedish *Didrikssaga* tells how he rode away secretly on a black horse to take vengeance on Witege, slew the traitor, but died of his wounds on the homeward journey; in the *Anhang zum Heldenbuch* he is led away by a dwarf into a hollow mountain and never seen again; and in the popular belief he has become one of Wodan's Wild Huntsmen.

Apart from Dietrich the four most important figures of the saga are Ermenrich, Hildebrand, Witege, and Heime. Of these Ermenrich represents, as we have seen, a combination of the historical Ermanaric and Odoacer. For Hildebrand, too, at least in his character of tutor and guardian, we have a historical parallel in Gensimund, whose loyal devotion to Theoderic's father and uncles during their minority preserved them their inheritance. The difference of name is sufficiently accounted for by the early incorporation in the Dietrich saga of the pre-Germanic story of combat between father and son. The *Hildebrandslied* shows that the father, in the Germanic version of the story, bore the name of Hildebrand; after his introduction into the Dietrich saga he was presumably identified with the hero's aged guardian and instructor, whose real name became superfluous and disappeared.

Another partly historical figure is Witege identical, in his capacity of Ermenrich's vassal, with the *Vidigoia*, *Gothorum fortissimus*, who, according to Jordanes, overcame the Sarmatians by guile and was the hero of epic songs. In his desertion from Dietrich to Ermenrich we have, perhaps, a reminiscence of Tufa's desertion from Theoderic to Odoacer, while his chief act of treachery, the surrender of Ravenna, suggests confusion with the incompetent king Witigis,

whose capitulation in Ravenna in 540 A.D. to an inferior force under Belisarius was felt by the Goths as a national disgrace. For Heime, however, Witege's comrade in treachery, there is no trace of a historical origin; he and another Witege(?), whose deeds were afterwards ascribed to the historical Vidigoia-Witege, seem from their supernatural origin to have been the heroes of a nature-myth, and to have been introduced into the Dietrich from the Ermanaric saga.

The other characters, such as the hot-headed Wolfhart, whose impetuosity in the *Nibelungenlied* brings about the death of all Dietrich's followers except Hildebrand; Alphart, whose untimely end at the hands of Witege and Heime filled Dietrich's camp with mourning; and Elsan, whose failure to keep watch over Etzel's sons was atoned for by death, according to some, by retirement to a monastery, according to other versions, and who reappears in *Laurin* as the monk Ilsung, to whom the captive dwarf is handed over for instruction and conversion to Christianity, and in the *Rosengarten zu Worms* as the abusive and quarrelsome monk Ilsan, were all, so far as we can tell, introduced at later stages in the development of the saga.

We can now form some idea of the medieval Dietrich epic that might have existed had some poet of sufficient ability made a selection from

the many separate Dietrich poems and stories, and, by the introduction of suitable motives, combined them into a harmonious whole. This task was, indeed, attempted by the original author of the *Thidrekssaga*, but his work was disfigured by a later redactor, a mere compiler who introduced so much extraneous matter that the *Thidrekssaga*, as we know it, is rather a compendium of Germanic hero saga than a Dietrich epic. Heinrich der Vogler, too, the author of *Dietrichs Flucht* and the *Rabenschlacht*, seems to have aimed at uniting the historical Dietrich traditions into a continuous epic under the title *Das Buch von Bern*; but his powers and patience proved unequal to the task. His work is incomplete and tedious, while his style lacks both the artistic finish of the Court Epic and the sprightliness of the Popular Epic. His two poems are, in fact, æsthetically the least satisfactory of all the poems of the cycle. None of them, it must be confessed, can lay claim to much artistic finish and restraint, but all except *Dietrichs Flucht* and the *Rabenschlacht* are at least good examples of the art of the wandering gleemen. The *Eckenlied* and *Sigenôt* have the merit of life and action, and so, too, have the poems of the *Virginal* group, in spite of their prolixity; the *Rosengarten zu Worms* abounds in humour—of a somewhat grotesque and primitive nature, it is true; *Laurin* is not with-

out humour of the same type, besides descriptive passages of much charm and touches of court refinement, and *Alpharts Tod* reaches a high standard in its directness, tragedy, and pathos.

Beyond the *Thidrekssaga*, however, and Heinrich der Vogler's *Buch von Bern* we know of no medieval attempt to use for a great epic the splendid material offered by the stories and poems of the Dietrich saga. And yet this saga, which had for its central figure a noble king, though of surpassing valour always slow to draw the sword, and though beloved by his subjects forced into exile by the treachery of his enemies and by his own chivalrous self-sacrifice; this saga, which was full of dramatic situations and not lacking in such striking figures as Ermenrich, the type of cruelty and greed, Sibeche his evil counsellor, Hildebrand, the faithful guardian, in spite of his years one of Dietrich's doughtiest warriors, and always ready with advice and help, Wolfhart, young, hot-headed, ever thirsting for the fray, and Witege, cunning and mercenary, turned traitor for the sake of gold; this saga with its record of adventures among giants and dwarfs and dragons, of long years of exile filled with valiant deeds, and of victorious return at last, seems to have all the essentials for a German Odyssey that might have borne comparison with the story of Ulysses itself.

LIST OF THE MORE IMPORTANT POEMS OF THE DIETRICH CYCLE

1. *The Hildebrandslied*, probably of Low German origin, but brought to Fulda (East Franconia) in the eighth century.

2. *Dietrichs Flucht*,
3. *Die Rabenschlacht*, { written by an Austrian, Heinrich der Vogler, towards the end of the thirteenth century.

4. *Alpharts Tod*, a Bavarian poem from the latter part of the thirteenth century.

5. *Das Eckenlied*, well known in both Northern and Southern Germany in the thirteenth century. Probably of Tyrolese origin.

6. *Sigenôt*, a High German poem, dating perhaps from the latter part of the thirteenth century. Probably of Tyrolese origin.

7. *Virginal*, *Dietrichs erste Ausfahrt*, and *Dietrich und seine Gesellen*, varying versions of a Tyrolese story and probably dating as poems from the end of the thirteenth century.

8. *Laurin*, or *Der kleine Rosengarten*, dating from the end of the thirteenth century, and of Tyrolese origin.

9. *Goldemar*, a fragment of a poem written by a certain Albrecht von Kemenaten in the thirteenth century and based on a Tyrolese story.

10. *The Thidrekssaga*, in prose, originally composed in Norway, about the middle of the thirteenth century, by an Icelandic saga-writer whose sources were poems and

stories then current in North Germany ; recast and largely expanded a generation later by a redactor.

To these might perhaps be added :

11. *Biterolf und Dietleib*, an Austrian poem from the early part of the thirteenth century.

12. *Der Rosengarten zu Worms*, or *Der grosse Rosengarten*, an Austro-Bavarian poem from the latter part of the thirteenth century.

Excluding Nos. 1 and 10, these poems, together with a few more dealing with other sagas, are frequently grouped together under the title of *Das Heldenbuch*, the name given by Kaspar von der Roen to a collection published by him in 1472.

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Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 (Virginal), 8, 9, 11 are edited in the *Deutsches Heldenbuch*, Berlin, 1866-78. This work is in five parts, of which Part I. contains Nos. 8 (ed. K. Müllenhoff) and 11 (ed. O. Jänicke), Part II. contains Nos. 2, 3, and 4 (all ed. E. Martin), Part V. contains Nos. 5, 6, 7, and 9 (all ed. J. Zupitza).

No. 4, with portions of other Dietrich epics, will also be found in the *Sammlung Götschen*, vol. 10 b.

No. 8 has been edited more recently by G. Holz, Halle, 1897.

No. 10 has been edited by Unger, Christiania, 1853, and translated into German by A. Raszmann in *Die deutsche Heldensage*, vol. ii., 2nd ed., Hannover, 1863 ;

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No. 12 has been edited by G. Holz, Halle, 1893.

DETAILED ABSTRACTS of most of the poems of the cycle, viz. Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, and 12, and in addition *Ermenrichs Tod*, *Etzels Hofhaltung*, and the *Younger Hildebrandslied*, are given, with copious extracts from the originals, in E. Henrici's *Das deutsche Heldenbuch*, vol. vii. of Kürschner's *Deutsche National-Litteratur*.

Shorter abstracts, in English, of Nos. 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, and 12, will be found in J. M. Ludlow's *Popular Epics of the Middle Ages* (London and Cambridge, 1865); and a fairly full résumé of No. 10 in Thomas Hodgkin's excellent *Theodoric the Goth* (pp. 372-424), one of Putnam's "Heroes of the Nations" Series.

POPULAR RECONSTRUCTIONS of the complete saga, such as that in G. Klee's well-known *Deutsche Heldensagen* (4th ed., Gütersloh, 1892) are fairly numerous. There is one in English, in M. W. Macdowall's *Epics and Romances of the Middle Ages* (2nd ed., London, 1884), an adaptation of W. Wägner's *Unsere Vorzeit* (4th ed., Leipzig, 1889).

Students desirous of investigating on their own account any of the numerous problems connected with the Dietrich cycle should study the views expressed by O. L. Jiriczek in his *Deutsche Heldensagen*, vol. i., pp. 119-331 (Strassburg, 1898), and by B. Symons in his article on *Heldensage* in Paul's *Grundriss der germanischen Philologie*, vol. iii., pp. 689-700 (2nd ed., Strassburg, 1900), and follow up the references there given. Frequent references will there be found to the older standard works, such as W. Grimm's *Die deutsche Heldensage* (3rd ed., Gütersloh,

1889); K. Müllenhoff's *Zeugnisse und Excurse zur deutschen Heldensage* (Berlin, 1860); L. Uhland's *Schriften zur Geschichte der Dichtung und Sage* (Stuttgart, 1873); W. Müller's *Mythologie der deutschen Heldensage* (Heilbronn, 1886); R. Heinzel's *Über die ostgothische Heldensage* (Vienna, 1889), &c. In these, and in K. Goedeke's *Grundriss zur Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung* (pp. 191-96), full bibliographical information is provided.

Jiriczek has given a popular treatment of the subject in *Die deutsche Heldensage* (*Sammlung Götschen*, No. 32), which has been translated into English by Miss M. Bentinck-Smith in her *Northern Hero-Legends* (London, 1902), one of Dent's Cyclopædic Primers.

The Dietrich saga has had but little influence on Modern German literature. Mention may, however, be made of H. Lingg's epic, *Die Völkerwanderung*, Felix Dahn's ballad, *Die Amelungen*, and of Karl Simrock's attempt in his *Amelungenlied*, published in his *Heldenbuch*, vols. iv.-vi., to write a new Dietrich epic representing the original form of the saga. Ernst von Wildenbruch's *König Laurin* (Berlin, 1902) can hardly be said to have any connection at all with the Dietrich saga. It deals with the fall of the Gothic power in Italy, and the references to Laurin are allegorical. Dietrich himself, and some of his men, figure, of course, in such modern works as W. Jordan's *Nibelunge* (Part I., *Sigfridsage*, Part II., *Hildebrants Heimkehr*), and Friedrich Hebbel's *Die Nibelungen*; but these are rather adaptations of the Nibelungen than of the Dietrich saga. Felix Dahn's *Kampf um Rom* also opens with an account of Dietrich's death.

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